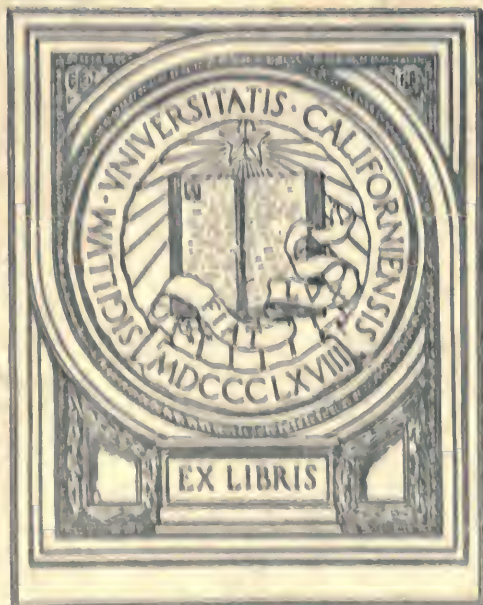


720
12
Bernard Moses

516

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



EX LIBRIS

IN MEMORIAM
BERNARD MOSES





HISTORICAL REVIEW

OF THE

ADMINISTRATION

OF

MR. NECKER.



HISTORICAL REVIEW

OF THE

ADMINISTRATION

OF

MR. N E C K E R.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

AC PLERIQUE SUAM IPSI VITAM NARRARE, FIDUCIAM POTIUS MORUM,
QUAM ARROGANTIAM ARBITRATI SUNT. TACITUS.

L O N D O N :

Printed for G. G. J. and J. ROBINSON, Paternoster-Row.

M DCC XCI.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

HJ
1082
N28 s E

HISTORICAL REVIEW

OF THE

ADMINISTRATION, &c.

Bernard More

THE unfortunate victim of repeated instances of injustice, of which the annals of history can furnish few examples, I felt all the weight of the most bitter recollections, without at the same time entertaining a wish to disseminate my painful sensations by means of the press. After so long a series of public actions, words I conceived were unnecessary; and, comparing sometimes my conduct with the ungrateful indifference of the National Assembly, I found in perfect silence a repose that was pleasing to the pride of my heart. Public opinion, in short, I scarcely know why, is no longer in my estimation what it was. The

B

religious

religious respect I entertained for it diminished, when I saw it subservient to the artifices of the designing ; and when I saw it tremble before the very men whom it would formerly have summoned to its bar, to expose to shame, and to brand with its reprobation.

I am urged however by my friends to pursue a different line of conduct ; but I still doubt whether the advice be prudent. They wish me to recal the attention of the public to my administration ; they wish me to revive the remembrance of it ; and they forget that in this day of trouble and anxiety all individual interests are set aside for those of the nation.

They tell me that, by a review of my conduct, I ought to afford my advocates the means of defending me : without considering that it is not so much information as courage that is wanted. They tell me, in short, of posterity : and they forget that the empire of the passions ceases where that of posterity begins ; they forget that, in the boundless space in which she has sovereign sway, there are no more deceptions, no more illusions. There it will be the province of truth alone to assign ranks, and to appoint places : it is only among ourselves, on this theatre of a day, that impostors can usurp
her

her rights, and invade for a moment her exalted functions.

Meanwhile a powerful motive actuates me. I am obliged to confess I cannot separate my cause from that of reason and virtue. They are in my opinion allied; my memory at least flatters me with this hope; and it becomes me to respect, to the very utmost, ties which I have formed with so much care; it becomes me to respect them by shewing that I have not violated them in any instant of my life. Influenced by this consideration, I should think myself negligent of my duty, if, to avoid attracting attention, and in servile compliance with the petty decorums of rival vanities, I countenanced by my indifference the policy of the wicked and the triumph of the ungrateful.

What is an individual in comparison with these general principles? What especially is a man who, like myself, approaches the goal of life? The hour is at hand when he will no longer be any thing to himself, but will be involved in that eternal silence which sinks and annihilates ages and generations.

If then he can give confidence to those who are disheartened by the issue of the contests they have witnessed; if he can detain them at

the moment they are prepared to desert the temple of morality ; if he can even retard their engagement with a new master, it becomes him eagerly to accomplish this purpose. He ought to act thus, regardless of every other consideration, and without being restrained by the paltry and frivolous pretexts of prudence and personal respect.

Why should I not confide in the power of virtue ? It is she who has twice made me victorious over the oppressions of intrigue, and the disgraces that are experienced in the courts of kings ; it is she who has taught me to contemplate the progress of detraction with apathy ; and it is by her influence that, forced at present to defend myself against a new species of injustice, I feel myself unawed by rank or power.

The National Assembly, who have demanded of me so many accounts, will doubtless permit me to present them with one more. Its model is to be found in the celebrated dialogue between Agrippina and Nero, and its summary is contained in that well known verse :

*Voila tous mes forfaits, en voici le salaire.**

I thus point out the division of my work : it seems to refer only to myself ; but let not

* Such are my crimes, and such is their reward.

this first appearance terrify the reader. I am well aware that, when a man no longer travels the high road of the passions ; when he can no longer be useful to any one ; when, if I may so express myself, he has passed the flood of life ; his day is closed, and he soon finds the necessity of being reserved in his communications with the world. I therefore promise that, without wandering from my subject, while I answer the reproaches of different parties, and endeavour simply to defend myself, I will introduce various discussions more generally interesting than that of my grievances.

I have served the king and the state seven years, during the course of two administrations ; and the following are the impressions which I myself retain of my conduct and my measures.

In 1776, when the king entrusted me with the direction of the treasury, I was but little known. I even scarcely knew myself ; for, without exposing what passes in his mind to the examination of others, a man must long remain uncertain as to the extent of his talents and the depth of his resources. To be confident of himself, it is frequently necessary that

he should derive information from comparing his thoughts with those of other men; it is necessary that he should make a trial of his strength against the hostility of events, against their number and their variety.

I had read, I had observed, I had reflected much; and from my earliest youth I had exercised myself in public affairs, by effectually contributing to invigorate the declining state of the East-India company, and by defending the interests of this establishment against the attacks of intrigue and the tyranny of misguided authority. It was then thought that I had rendered an essential service to the state.

I also turned my attention to objects which were the peculiar province of statesmen, when I discussed, in 1775, the principles applicable to the legislation and commerce of corn. A fervour then prevailed for a system of the most perfect freedom; this system was extended to exportation, without subjecting it to any regulations or restraints; and the kingdom began to be alarmed at the fatal consequences that might result from it. But the philosophers of the day despised experience, and would attend to nothing but reasonings. My publication tempered their extravagant ideas,

by opposing to them reflections of a still higher origin than the general deductions of the Oeconomists; and from this period the grand question of the commerce of corn was no longer discussed with a disdainful superiority to practical knowledge, and the principles of experience. We could afterward dispute on a footing respecting this freedom, and the limits of which it is susceptible; and, in one of the most interesting of all controversies, the despotic empire of theory is, I believe, for ever at an end. This was the first successful attack upon that philosophic sway whose power has been experienced in so many different shapes; and I rendered at the same time an essential service to France, a kingdom so often exposed to great calamities by one year's mistake respecting the principles of government that were most intimately connected with the fate of the people and the public tranquillity.

I owed however his majesty's nomination solely to the state of absolute ruin to which public credit was reduced. It had fallen to decay under the administration of men bred to the law; and it was proposed to try what knowledge acquired in a different manner could effect.

The resources however in which I principally confided were equally within the power of every man. They were order, œconomy, and the application of moral principles to all transactions of state. My only merit was that of perceiving, or rather of strongly feeling, that, in the administration of finances, a simple mode of proceeding and an upright conduct were greatly preferable to all the subtleties with which men of moderate talents are so much enraptured.

I did not at the same time neglect the succours that may be derived from caution, care, and attention ; which, though they cannot supply the place of essential principles, may favour and enforce their salutary influence. I was doubtless successful ; since, in the course of the five years of my first administration, and in the midst of a war that required in one year an extra supply of one hundred and fifty millions, the public funds, which in England fell from thirty to thirty-five per cent. experienced in France a considerable rise ; and since all the loans, to which recourse was had, were filled in the space of a single week.

Thus I restored the credit of France ; and on this credit, as is well known, depend the
safety

safety of the empire in time of war, the protection of the colonies, and the general support of the strength and power of the nation.

It was reserved for that spirit of innovation by which we are now governed, on all subjects, to censure the use of credit during the last war, as if it had been possible to supply its immense exigencies by means of taxes. I know not what extraordinaries the nation may be able to defray under a government in which she will herself regulate the revenue and the expenditure ; but formerly a resistance greatly injurious to public confidence would have been made, if, at the commencement of a war, a third *vingtième* only had been demanded ; yet this supply would have amounted to no more than twenty or twenty-five millions.

The re-establishment of credit, essential as it was to the state, would have afforded me but an imperfect degree of satisfaction, if it had for a single day diverted my attention from the interests of the people, the perpetual object of my solicitude. But, by saving the nation from extraordinary burthens, and such as were beyond its strength, which the want of credit would have rendered necessary, I saved it also from permanent taxes, that seemed indispensable,

dispensable, in order to balance the annual interest of loans for defraying the expences of the war ; and I was successful in finding an adequate supply for this increase of public expenditure by plans of order and œconomy.

The result and proof of what I advance have been seen in the *Compte Rendu* of January 1781, and in my Treatise on the Finances. I offered to defend this truth against a minister in power, and in the midst of the assembly of Notables of 1787 ; an assembly which he had himself selected.

The public controversy into which I have since been drawn, has left no doubt of the accuracy of the account of 1781. And, as this account has been drawn up by the same person, and from the same materials, as the general account laid before the States-General in the month of May, 1789, the approbation bestowed on the latter, after a scrupulous examination on the part of the committee of finance, is an additional argument in favour of the correctness of that of 1781.

Thus then during my first administration I took care of the power of the state, by raising credit to its highest pitch ; and I took care of its happiness, by saving the people from contributions

tributions that would have been unavoidable, if credit had not been restored; and from annual taxes which the interest of the loans would have demanded, had no melioration taken place at the same time in the finances. I ask, what was it possible to do more?

I would not be understood to rank the battles I have fought for the advancement of order and œconomy with the complete triumphs obtained by the National Assembly. Not but I might dispute the point of merit with her, were the infinite difference of our situations to be considered. The National Assembly has spoken in the name of the whole people; has proceeded with all the force of the empire; and has been attended and supported by the general wish: she had no need to respect either the prejudiced or the powerful; she disposed of the property of the nation in the name of the nation; the obstacles she had encountered with have only served to increase the velocity and energy of her motions; and the route she has pursued was cleared and levelled, as in an instant, by the mere pressure of the immense wheels of her triumphal car.

Contrast this prodigious power with the means and attempts of a minister, who, dismayed,

mayed, as it were, in the midst of a court long estranged to ideas of order and œconomy, resolves to promulgate these ideas, and fees himself obliged singly to contend against a multitude. The fortitude which my situation required can never be known. I still recollect the dark and long staircase of M. de Maurepas, which I ascended with fear and dejection, uncertain if I should succeed with him respecting some new idea that engaged my attention, and the object of which was commonly to obtain an increase of revenue by some just but severe operation. I still recollect the cabinet between two floors, which is placed immediately under the roof of the palace at Versailles, but above the king's apartments, and which, from its diminutiveness and situation, seemed to be the very quintessence of every species of vanity and ambition : there it was necessary to talk of reform and œconomy to a minister grown grey in the pomp and customs of the court. I recollect all the precaution it required to succeed ; and how, frequently repulsed, I obtained at last some indulgences for the public good ; and these I plainly saw were granted as a recompence for the resources I had discovered in the midst of war.

war. I still recollect the kind of shame that embarrassed me, when I introduced into my discourse, and ventured to state to him, some of those great moral ideas with which my heart laboured. I seemed then as gothic to this old courtier, as Sully appeared to the young ones the day he was seen at the court of Louis XIII.

With the king I felt more courage : young and virtuous, he was able and willing to hear all I had to propose. The queen also heard me favourably. But among the attendants on majesty, among courtiers and citizens, how innumerable were the animosities and hatreds to which I exposed myself ! I had to oppose with firmness every species of influence and power ; I had to contend with all the factions of individual interest ; and in this struggle I perpetually risked the feeble thread of my political existence. I did it however, and I proceeded boldly in my career without giving ground for a moment. When I recollect what my situation and what my conduct were, I confess I look with pity on the efforts made in the National Assembly to obtain the reputation of fortitude, when a pompous declamation, which is attended with no danger, informs us

3

that

that a thousand crowns have been retrenched or taken from the scattered soldiers of a routed army; for which innumerable plaudits are sure to be bestowed by its adherents. True it is that care is taken to make the house resound with mighty names, courtiers, ministers, and grandees, that the people may imagine they still are waging war with giants, though their champions are well convinced the beings with which they contend are phantoms.

The present is not the time to detail the plans of order and œconomy, and the various measures beneficial to the finances, which, during my first administration, were the objects of my incessant attention and study. My business is to proceed rapidly; and I shall content myself with observing, that the germ of the existing ideas is to be found in the two most remarkable institutions of my ministry.

By the establishment of the provincial assemblies, of which I laid the first foundation in 1779, it was intended to associate the whole nation in the direction of its interests, and to tear away the veil which had been so long spread over them by a small number of commissioners nominated by the king. This establishment gave to the provinces protectors
and

and guides, attached the citizen to the public welfare, and induced him to employ his thoughts and contribute the aid of his knowledge to the advancement of the national prosperity.

A second institution, not less important, was the resolution formed by the king of giving greater publicity to the state of the finances. He thus erected confidence on a more solid base, called the nation to the knowledge and examination of public government, and for the first time made the affairs of state a common concern.

The two measures I have mentioned, equally essential to happiness and good order, so greatly enlightened the public mind, that, if we take a view of preceding times, we shall find these two innovations at an immeasurable distance from the ideas under which we had lived for so long a period.

The minister who proposed the establishment of the provincial assemblies, narrowed extremely his own influence. The minister who proposed that the state of the finances should be always made public, laid his measures open to fair discussion. He did not preserve the privilege peculiar to the National Assembly,
that

that of being able to execute his beneficial projects the more readily by increasing every day his own power.

I also find the seeds of our present institutions, both in the declaration abolishing the rights of mortmain, by which my administration was distinguished, and in that which fixed the limits of the *taille*, prohibited its increase without the authority of laws registered in the parliaments, and thus for the first time secured this tax from the power of arbitrary extensions which government had reserved to itself, and which it had so long put in practice.

The new spirit that diffused itself and directed the public interest to every benevolent institution, is in like manner to be referred to the epocha of my first administration. The prisons, the infirmaries, the hospitals, the monasteries of charity, became an object of government ; and the improvements, the humane regulations that were applied to them ; the new establishments undertaken in the midst of war ; in fine, the manifold acts of royal bounty and compassion to the unfortunate, gave to patriotism, already put in motion by other more general dispositions, an impression of mildness and sensibility that rendered

dered it an object of universal attention. Men did good because they desired it, and they desired it from the love of it; no appearance of effort or restraint accompanied these first aspirations of a people, acting from their own impulse, and shewing no desire to exchange their natural genius for that which they have since been persuaded to adopt. And did we then take our last farewell of that constellation of generous and social virtues, which so long rendered the character of the French celebrated in Europe? How great the loss to them, and how deep the gloom (so to express myself) that is spread over the universe, if this splendor is ultimately to give place to the artificial glow and systematic activity that derive their feelings from intellectual subtlety, and their virtues from the wild exaggeration of opinions! A perfect political legislation is more necessary than ever, under this new discipline; while, on the other hand, the character that once did honour to the people of France, served as a bond of union to the distant ranks of society, and qualified with its healing balm the errors of government and the mistakes of legislation.

I wish no longer to detain the attention of the reader on my first administration: it is

C

sufficient

sufficient to have taken a cursory view of it, and pointed out its connection with the present period, the only period men love, the only one they wish to be acquainted with, the only one they remember.

I shall be less concise in presenting the essential circumstances and leading events of my second administration: but I ought previously to tell in a few words what use I made of the interval between these two epochas; as it was wholly consecrated to studies that were not foreign to public affairs and the felicity of mankind. I regard the indifference of the National Assembly as a wound inflicted on my reputation; and I respect too highly the weight of its opinion to neglect any means of vindicating myself, when I appeal from its unjust treatment, to the nation, to Europe, and to posterity.

It is known that I devoted my first leisure to the composition of a very extensive work upon the subject of finances in general, and those of France in particular; and this work, by the quantity of positive knowledge with which it is filled, and the method with which that knowledge is arranged, has not been unserviceable to persons employed in advancing
the

the interests of the state, or destined by their situation for the first offices of government. I have prevented genius from being disheartened, by clearing the way for it; and I have excited every judicious mind to the study of finance, by fixing guide-posts at those innumerable cross-ways whose intricate appearance was repulsive to curiosity.

This work was seen in the hands of all the Notables, assembled by the king, in 1787, to assist him by their counsels in the critical situation of affairs. It has served as a guide to all those who, since that period, have concurred in operating the public welfare; and if I were merely to consider it as a collection of interesting facts, and valuable information, I have still the hope of having made some progress towards the dearest object of my wishes, by developing in various ways the inseparable union of policy in administration with moral principles: a noble and sure alliance, which will ever be the corner stone in the true science of government, and the main basis of the prosperity of nations and the happiness of mankind!

It was from a desire to strengthen these principles of morality, principles whose salu-

tary influence was ever present to my mind, that I endeavoured, to the best of my power, to invigorate the connection that unites them with religious opinions. - I saw indeed morality always honoured, or rather always celebrated ; but men were perpetually shaking, and threatened with utter destruction, the venerable columns by which it was supported ; and they wished to substitute in their place feeble props, the work of human hands, and which, without bearing any proportion to the majesty of the edifice, could stand no comparison with that universal code, with that sacred authority, that, in a manner the most irresistible, points out to men their duties, determines their mutual sacrifices, and leads them to the felicity which they are capable of attaining.

It was by an appeal to the common sense of mankind, and also, I believe, by reflections not inconsistent with philosophy, that I rendered a public homage to the importance and reality of religious opinions, opinions deserted by the spirit of the age, by that spirit eager after every species of empire, by that spirit proud of its chains, and which, blindly trusting to the imaginary extent of its powers, would substitute its reasonings instead of the light of
ages,

ages, its conceits in the place of whatever exists, and would resolve to new-model the world, without understanding a single link of the chain.

The book which I here call to remembrance, the volume of my dearest thoughts, I may justly rank among the labours I have devoted to the happiness of men and the utility of the public. Alas! in my present situation why have I not this book still to write! They were tranquil days which I passed in raising myself by meditation to the idea of a Supreme Being; and I have now more need than ever of placing myself in this happy sanctuary. We there see the injustice of men from so great an eminence, that we can still love them notwithstanding our disapprobation of their conduct, we can still love them in the midst of the persecutions of which they have rendered us the victims. The idea of a Supreme Being, that idea ever salutary, is applicable to every occurrence of human life; and while by its greatness it fills the compass of the world, more subtle than light, it pierces to the bottom of the soul, to fill it with the consolations of which human nature is susceptible.

I have need of these reflections, I have

need at this moment of repose, before I farther present myself to the eyes and examination of men, before I pursue a discussion the necessity of which is painful to my heart. I am now to recite the principal transactions of my second administration, and I shall introduce such reflections as naturally suggest themselves on the occasion.

There seems to me an abyss of ages between the two periods; it seems to be a new nation of which I am going to speak. The soil and the climate are the same; every thing else is changed.

It was in the month of August 1788 that the king entrusted me for the second time with the administration of the finances. I had been exiled a little before; and my memory furnished other recollections that were not calculated to make me in love with the situation. I submitted however without reluctance; the state of public affairs imposed it on me as a law; and I looked in the face of difficulties with a resolution to conquer them.

It was not long before I received a precious recompence for this sacrifice of myself. The unfortunate events that had taken place in the course of the preceding year, had spread alarm through the kingdom, and agitated every mind.

mind. The frequent recourse to beds of justice, the subversion of the parliaments, their prorogation sine die by royal authority, the translation of that of Paris to Troyes, the subsequent exile and imprisonment of many of its members; the sudden seizure of twelve gentlemen of Bretagne, their confinement in the Bastille, and lastly the establishment of a *cour pleniere*, which, under the immediate eye of government, was to be henceforth all that the people had to depend upon—these injudicious acts of authority, happening in the midst of the fermentation that had long existed, excited in the provinces a kind of discontent and irritation, that seemed the certain presage of a general insurrection. An alarming commotion was on the point of breaking out at Grenobles, and the citizens had already arms in their hands, when the news arrived of the change that had taken place in administration: their hopes immediately revived, and tranquillity was restored. A similar revolution, succeeding to similar storms, put a stop in various other parts of the kingdom to the commencement of a civil war, and prevented calamities the magnitude of which it is not possible to calculate. I re-

ceived from every quarter the most flattering proofs of a confidence that forcibly called me to the discharge of my duties. I understood these duties; I determined to obey the voice of the nation, which was not less general than it was in my opinion just. The advantages I possessed, my eager desire of the public good, my industry, the credit and eclat which always accompany the appointment of a new minister when his appointment has been considered as necessary, were all of them faithfully employed in the cause of equity and freedom. The parliaments were recalled to their functions, the exiles returned, all the prisons were thrown open; the idea of a cour pleniére, and all the measures sanctioned in the famous bed of justice of 8th May 1788, were for ever annihilated; in short, a general satisfaction, celebrated by lively acclamations which resounded from one end of the kingdom to the other, took place; and blessings were bestowed on the king for this just revolution, a revolution that called to the minds of the French, ever disposed to love their sovereign, the purity of his intentions, and his constant attachment to the public good.

These times, these events, are at no great distance;

distance ; yet are they unfortunately too far back for remembrance.

Meanwhile the alarm in which we had lived, the apprehensions to which we had been subject, and many injudicious arrangements of finance, many erroneous measures, had weakened very considerably a credit that had long been in a decrepit state ; and confidence had been absolutely destroyed by the arrêt of council which created paper-money to pay the dividends of the Hotel-de-Ville, the interest of unfunded debts, and various other incumbrances of the state. At the same time the most burthenfome means were resorted to, to make up other indispensable payments ; and, with a view of keeping off the last crisis of the disorder, they prolonged by every possible device an intermittent state, that could not but speedily terminate in a total extinction.

Thus, when I returned to the helm of affairs, there were not five hundred thousand livres in the royal treasury ; every species of credit was annihilated ; and yet I was obliged to raise several millions in the space of a week, to discharge engagements that were on the point of expiring, or expences of which the least delay would have occasioned the most alarming

alarming dangers. I surmounted these first obstacles : but new difficulties were continually springing up, because the produce of every tax was consumed beforehand ; because there existed a great disproportion between the revenues and the ordinary expenditure ; and chiefly also because it would have been unbecoming on every account to encroach on the province of the States General, by having recourse to public loans, or any other regular and systematic proceeding.

It was only then by cruising, by practising all the manœuvres and resources circumscribed within a narrow compass, that I succeeded in guiding the frail vessel of the State, without running her aground, or permitting her to sink, till the opening of the States General, a period which I considered as the first signal of a safe port. But the National Assembly having postponed to a considerable distance the discussion of the finances, I was obliged to continue the manœuvres of a navigator in danger, much longer than I had at first supposed ; and I actually passed two years of anxiety, ever intent on warding off imminent perils, and preventing a shipwreck, the consequences

quences of which would have been ruinous beyond the power of calculation.

All these cares, all these sollicitudes, have been forgotten as a dream. Calamities from which we have been preserved, leave the impression only of negative advantage, of actions neither brilliant in their colour nor bold in their relief, and the supineness of gratitude forgets that they exist.

In the mean time it may at least be remembered, that the famous arrêt of council of August 1788 was not carried into effect; that arrêt which spread such alarm, by authorising the payment of all the debts and expences of the State, partly in paper and partly in money.

I could easily cite other circumstances and other services of a similar nature: they are numerous. But what can I expect from words, when actions, with all their bold and legible characters, are blotted from the memory, and leave not a trace behind them?

I ought however to insist upon one transaction on my part, that may easily have escaped observation, and which would have been painful to my feelings, had it not been dictated by

the purest regard for the public good. It is not perhaps forgotten, that during the course of my first administration I was in continual motion ; every thing occupied my attention, every thing called for my activity—now an important reform, now a saving, now a new construction of the boards of finance, a diminution of treasuries, a new system of accounts, changes without number, and preparations for various arrangements of which the moment of execution was not yet arrived ; in short, there was not a day but I had employment of some kind. I saw, on resuming the government in August 1788, that the good of the state dictated to me a different mode of proceeding ; I saw that, for its sake, it was incumbent on me to keep the administration of the finances in a kind of obscurity and silence. I felt that, by endeavouring again to destroy the abuses which had been reproduced in such abundance since I retired from office, I should excite, for the sake of a work that could last only for a day, a multiplicity of complaints and grievances that would diminish my resources and weaken my credit, at a time when all my strength was necessary to succeed in the only great enterprise in which it behoved me to concentrate my efforts, an enterprise that was to operate a
general

general reform—I mean, the formation of the States General. I reflected that, at so short a distance from the assembling of the deputies of the nation, it would be useless to begin with my single arm a new war with abuses, when shortly they would all be scrutinized and destroyed for ever by a more vigorous hand. I considered that, by preserving tranquillity in the kingdom, by supporting the tottering edifice of the finances, by providing against a scarcity of provisions, by warding off great calamities, by obviating numberless difficulties of a less conspicuous nature, and by levelling the ways that led to the most important and desirable events, I should acquit myself of the duties of a public man, of a good citizen, and the faithful servant of a king who desired and who studied the good of the state.

Guided by these reflections, I devoted myself without reserve to the preparing and accomplishing this great design.

I must here digress for a moment, to defend some particular instances of my political conduct from the unjust reproaches that have been cast on them.

I know what some people say of them. They cannot forgive the firmness and zeal I shewed

shewed for the convocation of the States General. “ The embarrassment of the finances gave
“ rise to the idea : but, since I thought myself
“ able to surmount the difficulties with which
“ other men had been too easily frightened,
“ it became me, as minister of the king, to
“ discard a project conceived in a moment
“ of alarm, and the consequences of which
“ would necessarily be dangerous to the authority of the sovereign.”

I give to the objection its full force; but it will admit, I conceive, of an answer.

They forget, in the first place, that there are at all times various duties incumbent on a minister. I do not imagine that his character and functions would oblige him, even under the old form of government, to fix all his attention on the authority of the monarch, and to defend this authority in every sense and application which prejudices or corrupt usages might have introduced. A minister, if he were an honest man, might lawfully have assumed the feelings that became a virtuous monarch, and made them the rule of his conduct. He might do this with the greater propriety, since, not holding his office by an indissoluble bond, the prince could dismiss him from his confidence,

dence, the moment when the character and opinions of the man he had made choice of to serve him, ceased to accord with his wishes and designs. It was not the business of a minister to act independently of the king ; but, placed near his person, and receiving his orders, he was expected to enlighten his justice, to direct his inclinations, and secure to him the first gratifications of the throne—the felicity of his people, and their unalterable gratitude. It would then be a flagrant error to suppose that formerly the sole duty of a minister was to watch over the maintenance of royal authority ; for if it behoved him to enforce a ready compliance, the reasonableness of his orders could not be indifferent to him. And why are we desirous that no sentiment of a citizen should be allowed to the ministers of a sovereign, or have any share in their councils ? They would then be compelled to abjure the first of virtues, the moment they were called upon to aid by their labours the august chief of the state, and the guardian of the fate of the empire. The party who wish to interpret in this way the ancient obligations of the servants of the king, forget that they would themselves
have

have despised the minister who, in serving the monarch, should have neglected his duty towards the nation. They would have wished their own interests to be taken care of, both as to their private and corporate capacity; but, even putting themselves out of the case, they would have been the first to applaud all the features of intrepid virtue displayed by a minister who was at the same time a citizen; only, perhaps, they would have done it with more spirit, when the introduction of severe principles was at a distance from their general application.

Doubtless, as I declared to the States General, and as I had previously informed the king and his council, the order of the finances could have been restored without the intervention of a National Assembly, and without having recourse to new taxes. But I considered the convocation of the States General in a more important light; and it was not on the exigencies of the finances, it was not on any single measure of any sort, that I laid the stress of my expectations as to this glorious event. I knew better than any one how precarious and momentary was the good that could be operated under a government in which the principles
of

under a government in which the principles of administration changed at the will of ministers, and ministers at the will of intrigue. I had observed that, in the rapid succession of political characters, there was time for no general idea to establish itself, and no lasting benefit to be secured. It was thus we saw for a long period, in the midst of national wealth, a disgraceful want of credit; in the midst of the most diversified and numerous taxes, a perpetual embarrassment in the finances; in the midst of the wretchedness of the people, the most injudicious liberalities; in the midst of the progressive light of the age, ancient prejudices retained both in commerce and legislation; in the midst of generous sentiments that inspire men with the love of liberty, acts of the most despotic authority; and, by a striking singularity, the exercise of this authority was accompanied with the most timid reserve, and a dread of every obstacle, whenever it was proposed to benefit the state by new measures, and in ways that had not yet been tried.

In short, the example of a neighbouring people, happy and flourishing under a constitution in which the knowledge and general

D

wish

wish of the nation were directed to the common interests of the state, as well as various other considerations, habitually recalled the attention to the advantages that might result from the assembling of the States General; and the spirit of the times, and the desire of France, enforced this attention. A more pleasing prospect could not be presented to the nation; it appeared to the imagination as a period of repose and felicity, after a long series of alarms. The kingdom, tired of the continual fluctuation of the principles of government, wished to see established, in a permanent manner, a just proportion between the revenues and the expenditure, a prudent use of credit, a judicious distribution of taxes, a general plan of public beneficence, an enlightened system of legislation; and, above all, a constitutional security both for civil and political liberty. The most able minister, who, in the room of this pleasing and grand expectation, should from motives of vanity have wished the nation to enjoy the evanescent fruits of his talents, would have seemed to act like him who should prefer an artificial firework to the genial light and constant heat of the rays of the sun; and his foolish presumption would have rendered

him delinquent both against the nation and the age.

I see, as well as other men, the reproaches that may be cast on the National Assembly; but I am conscious at the same time of the great obligations that are due to it. Beside, this first pupil of public opinion will, when it shall become necessary, be corrected by itself; its master will reprimand it for having been so eager to shew itself, and for having been too confident in the first essays of its undisciplined genius; he will order its faults to be repaired by a second legislature; and this again will in like manner see its ideas perfected by the assemblies that shall succeed: but all will have this incomparable advantage, an advantage which no other form of government can obtain—that of going forward aided by the nation; that of always acting in conformity with the general wish; that of possessing strength proportioned to the magnitude of the undertaking; that of having no obstacles to impede them; lastly, and which is a prerogative in the utmost degree essential, that of obtaining confidence before the event of their measures can be seen; and of out-running, by means of these various advantages, the slow progress of experience. I have there-

fore no doubt, when order and the regular proceedings of authority shall be combined with the vast fund of knowledge and observation of which these assemblies will be the centre, that all abuses will be gradually destroyed, and France, that great and proud kingdom, cleared of its briars and thorns, will be sown afresh, if I may be allowed the figure, and will reap every day the happy fruits of its new cultivation.

I conceive that I have thus answered in a satisfactory manner the reproach I undertook to examine ; and, after the weighty reasons I have employed, I should be inclined to overlook an inferior and trifling circumstance, if it were not of a nature that commonly makes an impression on the mass of mankind. I will add then, that the minister of the finances who should have devoted his whole attention to petty minutiae, must have felt the greatest aversion for the convocation and establishment of the States General ; for he was sure of thus degrading his office, and of falling from the pinnacle of credit and power to a subaltern agency, destitute of the smallest influence ; and I had not to learn that the respect for men in office was proportioned with wonder-

ful accuracy and admirable precision to their degree of influence in affairs. They do not at first perceive this, and for a long time they have the candour to suppose that it is themselves who are loved, that it is themselves who are fought, that it is themselves who are admired; but, at the instant of their fall or their decline, the separation of what belonged to their person from what belonged to their office, is made with a quickness of which no chemical process can give a sufficiently just idea.

The speedy convocation of the States General being once determined upon, it was desirable and necessary to employ the most active attention to the mode in which it was to be done, and to adopt in this respect a reasonable and prudent choice. The parliament of Paris, by the vote with which it accompanied the register of the king's declaration of the month of May 1788, had attempted to oblige the monarch to form it on the model of the States assembled at Paris in 1614. The national wish, and the improvement of the age, opposed this form; and the difficulties and great inconveniences attending it, were exhibited in the preamble of the arrêt of council of 5th

October 1788 ; and the same truth was laid open in a number of subsequent writings. I thought it absolutely necessary to introduce some weighty opinion, as a counterbalance to this desire of the first parliament in the kingdom ; and I proposed to the king to consult, on this important question, the Notables of the realm.

The Notables of 1787, composed in a great measure of the first nobility, bishops, and magistrates, did not combine all the impartiality that might be desired : but they had been selected under the preceding ministry, and for affairs absolutely foreign to the constitution ; and, by recalling them, all suspicion of sinister views on the part of government would be taken away. This consideration determined his majesty.

The king then was anxious, above all things, to find a mode of convoking the States General that should attract the confidence of the nation ; for he wished the Assembly to possess the actual power of doing good, in order to prevent its becoming, like a legislator without authority, from the defective observance of its decrees, a source of confusion and intestine dispute.

The

The Notables devoted themselves to the most assiduous and useful labours. By their enquiries they pointed out the numerous difficulties it was necessary to clear, previous to the convocation of an assembly of the States General ; and by their examinations and decisions they facilitated and made sure the path of government. Without the support of their opinion, the council could never have obtained the confidence necessary for determining an infinite number of questions which would have been the occasion of continual embarrassment and contradiction.

The most important of all, that which concerned the comparative number of deputies of the three orders, was determined by the Notables in the same manner as it had been by the parliament ; but their decision, which was not unanimous, excited such loud and general clamours, that the king thought it just to have it discussed, separate from all the rest, in his council.

I doubtless advised him to this measure ; but it is manifest that I was influenced by no spirit of partiality. All my ties, all my habits of intercourse, were with that order of society which applauded the decision of the Notables :

and it was one of my first mortifications to find myself in opposition to their sentiments, and that unalterably ; since the conviction of my conscience, and the good of the state, to the best of my judgment, imposed on me, as a severe duty, the conduct I adopted on this memorable occasion.

It was after various preparatory committees that I delivered in the Council of State the report which every one is acquainted with. There had been considerable debates on the important question thus submitted to the examination of ministry ; for their opinions were not uniform ; and the most laborious discussion preceded the determination of his majesty, a determination manifested by the decision of council of 27th December 1788. The Commons succeeded in obtaining the object of their wishes and their prayers, that of a representation equal to the two other orders combined. This was a period for the ebullitions of gratitude : to the King they testified their satisfaction by the most flattering demonstrations of affection and loyalty ; and I also came in for a share in their acknowledgments. They received as a benefit what was merely a point of justice. This mistake of men of sensibility

sensibility is the only consolation of virtuous kings.

The severe and unrelenting enmity of a considerable party against me, is solely owing to this act of justice, so simple and natural in its principle; and, by a singularity that is distressing to my heart, while I experience on all sides the effects, or observe the traces, of an obdurate resentment, if I turn my regards to those whom I have served, their ungrateful indifference affords me a spectacle still more painful. Happily I have the consolation of having been guided in all my actions by the purest motives; and this remembrance has so much sweetness, so much life in it, that notwithstanding the injustice of men, and notwithstanding the most complete desertion, one is not left alone.

The report of the council of 27th December, gave an impartial detail of the arguments that supported, and those which controverted, my opinion. I shall not repeat the ideas contained in it; they have since been taken up, extended, and examined in numberless publications. But I perceive foreigners giving a favourable ear to this simple argument employed

ployed by the adversaries of the Commons :
“ Either the three Chambers ought to deli-
“ berate separately, and then the number of
“ deputies of the Tiers-Etat would be a matter
“ of indifference to that order of the people ;
“ or the three Chambers ought to deliberate
“ in common, and then the deputies of the
“ Tiers-Etat would be on an equal footing
“ with the two other Orders: a distribution
“ contrary to the ancient usages of the realm.”

But to this argument we may oppose another of a similar nature, and more deserving of attention :

Either the three Chambers ought to deliberate separately, and then the number of deputies of the Tiers-Etat would be a point of indifference to the two first Orders ; or the three Chambers ought to deliberate in common, and then, notwithstanding the ancient usages of the realm, which are liable to dispute, and will admit of various constructions, it would have been a singular phenomenon, in this æra of intellectual progress and improvement in all sorts of ideas, in this æra when the oppression of the Commons was on the point of being extirpated, if they had not been allowed the same number of defenders

as the two other Orders, who were in possession of every favour and every privilege.

It would have been strange, unjust, and impolitic, to have rejected the reasonable demand of ninety-eight men in a hundred of the nation, and the equitable wish of that numerous class of citizens whose labour, knowledge, and industry, constitute the wealth and splendour of France. It is a flagrant wrong to pretend to combat maxims already obsolete against all the vigour of the natural principles of justice, when these principles blaze forth and are seconded by the general wish of the nation. It is from not having observed sufficiently early the progress of opinions, and their invincible power, that the two first Orders fixed their eyes on the past, and exerted their combined strength to maintain it in existence, instead of imitating the wisdom of government, which yielded in some respects to prevailing opinion. The master-stroke of policy in human affairs, is to act with foresight, and to obtain the merit of sacrifice, before the moment arrives when sacrifice will be regarded as duty, and will be inadequate to the exigency of the situation.

How sound would have been the policy of the two first Orders, and what aid would they
not

not have afforded to the king himself, if, instead of expecting every thing from an influence that had ceased to exist, they had not disputed so long about the verification of powers; if they had not persisted in rejecting the first overtures of accommodation suggested by the king's ministers, and opposed the most direct obstacle in the way of moderate measures, which, assisted by the ascendancy of the monarch, might in due time have reconciled the jarring interests of the different parties! How easy is it to form an idea of the conduct they ought to have pursued, a conduct that would immediately have fixed the public opinion in their favour, and enabled them to appear in the National Assembly with all the superiority that would have resulted from their fortune, their rank, and their credit! But they absented themselves till they had displayed in too conspicuous a light their party colours, and erected a standard under which those deputies of the Tiers-Etat who were disposed to side with them dared no longer enlist. It is an error that has been committed more than once in great political contests—The party that, from an obstinate adherence to its hereditary principles, has remained stationary, while the other was going forward,

forward, has lost the opportunity of tempering the new ideas with the leaven of the old ; and when irritation has succeeded, has acquired strength, and we are desirous of compounding with, or attempt to moderate it, we find it an arduous undertaking; and we see too late how imprudent it was to leave innovators for so long a time to sail alone, favoured by the gales both of opinion and fortune.

I have pointed out more forcibly than any person, in my different works, the empire of public opinion, and its increasing strength. Foreigners can scarcely form an idea of such a power, and cannot comprehend how it can be put in a balance against military force. But no country so completely as France unites to an immense population all that can rouse men to freedom of sentiment and freedom of thinking; an abundance of wealth, an immense national debt which attaches to the land a multitude of independent men, the activity of commerce, the cultivation of the arts, the eclat of letters, the progress of science, the love of novelty, the social spirit, the vehement desire of praise, the fascinating practice of every kind of ostentation ; and in the midst of this combination of circumstances, which
gave

gave a direction to the national genius, there has started up in these latter days a new philosophy, which, carrying all before it, destroying our fortresses, our banks, our barriers, has so levelled the moral world, as to render it favourable to, and incline it to establish, every political theory, and every system of legislation.

In the mean time, as long as public opinion divided its forces, royal authority had little to fear, and frequently derived from it essential advantage; this opinion constituting a principal reward for courage and military virtue. Public opinion, attentive at that time to different objects, and diffused over a large space, did not and could not create any alarm; but the disorder and ruin of the finances, by collecting its scattered rays into one focus, have increased to such a degree its action and energy, that it is become indispensably necessary either to yield to, or at best to compound with it.

The party who oppose the admission of too great a number of deputies of the Commons into the States General, and who accuse me of a breach of duty towards the monarch, seem to have lost sight of various circumstances. They forget, for example, that at the
time

time I resumed the reins of administration, the king conceived that he had reason to complain of the conduct of the Noblesse in the late political dissensions; whereas the Tiers-Etat had in various provinces shewn a considerable deference to the views of government. They forget also that they have frequently ascribed the violence of the Assembly to the ascendancy of the popular leaders, and their secret plots; but enumerate these leaders, and it will be found that the majority of them were not deputed by the order of the Commons. In short, the party whose objections I am refuting, cannot consider themselves as having no share in the measures adopted by the court the 11th of July; measures which excited all the kingdom to arms, and eventually occasioned the desertion of the troops. In the mean time, the balance of strength being once subverted, and that in so striking a manner, the defence of the existing powers, and the support of public order, vested no longer in the hands of government; and the language of reason, that last resource, lost at the same time a considerable share of its energy and influence.

It behoves me to make one observation more, singularly applicable to this subject. In attacking

attacking the representation of the Tiers-Etat in the National Assembly, the two first Orders now derive all their arguments from the interests of the royal authority ; whereas, at the time, they considered this question only as it affected their own prerogatives. But it was the judicious and beneficent intention of the monarch that all privileges as to pecuniary contributions should be for ever annihilated ; and the Orders who enjoyed them entered readily into this sentiment of general equity. There was no reason to presume that the Tiers-Etat wished to exceed the bounds of innovation marked out by the king in the decision of council of 27th December, a decision that included every thing that could give security to political freedom. They were circumstances of an extraordinary nature that led beyond these bounds ; and of this we shall be convinced if we read the majority of instructions given to the deputies of the third Order, and still more if we recollect the language of the Tiers-Etat at the time the quantity of its representation was decided in the States General : the same language is also to be seen in the letters of the municipalities, which contain the most becoming sentiments respecting
the

the royal authority, the monarchy, and the person of the Sovereign.

Such are the facts which it became the losing party to have known and remembered, before they erected themselves into censors of past transactions.

The greater part of these considerations are equally applicable to the objections made against the number of undignified clergy elected as representatives of the general body. I must add however, that the undignified clergy were become at once electors and capable of being elected, in consequence of a regulation discussed and decreed in the Assembly of Notables, the same which accorded a similar right to all the inferior noblesse, whether they were or were not landed proprietors. It is asked indeed why government agreed to this regulation, as it did not think proper to conform to the sentiments of a majority of the Notables, respecting the proportion of deputies of the Tiers Etat? Is it then possible not to perceive, that government would have lost the power of dissenting from the opinions of the Notables, the moment it adopted any measure contrary to the general wish of the nation?

It was by means of this wish that it could

E

regulate

regulate the representation of the Tiers Etat ; and vain would have been its attempt to act at once in opposition both to the general opinion and that of the Notables. The objection then to which they would have me reply, is of a nature purely abstract.

Equally destitute of force is the objection, that as the king was obliged to conform to the sentiments of the Notables, as to the eligibility of the undignified clergy, he ought to have renounced the wise and equitable views by which he had been influenced in fixing the number of representatives of the Tiers Etat. These views were allied to considerations of too general and cogent a nature to be sacrificed. Beside, intent upon supporting the weak against the powerful, the king saw nothing to fear from introducing into the States General the surest friends of the people, and such as had the best opportunity of knowing their real wants ; he saw nothing to fear from admitting into a political assembly a class of citizens, who, from the nature of their profession, were attached to the love of peace, to a respect for authority, and to the preservation of public order, of which the precepts of religion and morality constituted them the guardians.

In

In fine, if we regard only the prerogatives of the clergy, we shall find that the inferior order partook, with those in higher situations, of that jealousy which is anxious for the maintenance of these prerogatives, and that in fact they have never deserted the common cause of their profession.

In the principles laid down for the formation of the States General, there were other circumstances calculated to balance the consequences that might result from the eligibility of the undignified clergy. Such, for example, was the power the electors enjoyed of chusing deputies in an order different from their own; a power that has occasioned the nomination of many nobles, both those who are so by birth and those who are so from office, to be representatives of the Tiers Etat, while no member of the commons is to be seen among the deputies of the noblesse. It may also be observed that the inhabitants of the free towns, possessing a number of exclusive privileges, felt but a slender attachment to the general interest of the commons; and, which is a consideration of still higher importance, that in the natural course of things, the nobles, the chief seigneurs, and high dignitaries, would be

better able to obtain votes in the order of the Tiers Etat, than the Tiers Etat would be to gain in its favour the opinion of men superior to itself in wealth and credit : so that equality of numbers was insufficient to secure equality of influence.

We ought, if we would judge fairly, to go back to the period when the fate of elections was as yet wholly unknown. There may be more prudence, but where is the merit of uttering our prophecies when the event has already taken place, and we do nothing more than reverse the dates, and call observation by the name of foresight ? when we may securely prepare our maxims and our principles, and at leisure adjust the correspondence between them and the incidents for which they are to account ?

Such is the pleasure we derive from referring to a single idea, soon learned, and soon stored up in the memory, all that is most complicated in a long series of historical circumstances.

Thus the *doubling of the Tiers*, constantly used as a term of reproach, will probably always continue so ; for, by directing our accusations against the chief measure of government,

ment, we are exempted from ascribing any blame to ourselves.

The total number of the deputies has been an object of animadversion to the same party. By making it so considerable, the king, they say, is placed in a dependance on the Assembly.

This reasoning is also of a recent date ; for, at the period of the formation of the National Assembly, the friends of the king, the friends of France, all good citizens, were equally desirous that the States General should have the requisite degree of strength to enable them to do good, and obtain the respect of the nation. I will add, that, even as the question is stated at the present period, it is a mistake to ascribe to the number of deputies the political exaggerations adduced as a reproach against the National Assembly ; for these exaggerations are much less the result of its power, than the effect of its weakness. They may be regarded, for the most part, as the fruit of the external powers which rule the Assembly ; and the more the number of deputies had been reduced, the less able would it have been to resist the overbearing influence of the different associations by which it is surrounded. We have seen, in the instance of the last States of Bretagne, how an

assembly of the commons, held at the Hôtel de Ville, gave to a small number of the deputies of this order, having a seat in the States, a spirit of resistance and innovation, which perhaps they would not have had if their number had been increased by the admission of the very same persons who held their sittings out of the hall. In general, those who take upon them to encourage and incite others, themselves exempt from every kind of responsibility, rarely observe any just bounds. The persons really responsible have no need of resorting to violent means to attract notice ; while the others, placed in no conspicuous station, are obliged to signalize themselves by the extravagance of their sentiments, in order to raise them from their obscurity.

The last subject of censure, relative to the convocation of the States General, is the place fixed upon for their sittings. It should have been, it is said, at a greater distance from the tumult of the capital. Here also the objectors judge more from events than previous discernment. What occurred at the moment of deliberating on this question was, that the last States, those of 1614, were held at Paris ; and it was not natural to exhibit marks of distrust,

distrust, on the part of the king, when he was securing to the nation a mass of political advantages unparalleled in the annals of history. At such a time he ought not to have shewn the appearance of a doubt respecting a gratitude, of which he had received the pledge in the benedictions that were bestowed upon him after the decision of the council ; and it would universally have been construed into doubt, if, after so many concessions on his part, and in the midst of the loyalty that was felt for him, a system of jealousy and precaution had been adopted, which, under the regency of Catherine of Medicis, had not been thought necessary. There was so much the more to mislead the minds of men in this instance, as the general administration could with less propriety than formerly withdraw itself from Paris, on account of the increase of business, and multiplication of affairs of finance, in a city become the centre of all the collections, and the point of communication between the revenue and the expenditure. Beside, it was known that the States General would have to study, in a minute and accurate manner, every branch of the administration of the finances ; and both their enquiries and their labours

would have been found impracticable, if they had been fixed at too great a distance from the magazine of documents which were necessary to them.

Lastly, it is doubtless remembered, that what was most to be apprehended, and with reason, from the deputies of the provinces, was a too great indifference to the public debt; but, by being placed near the capital, it was supposed they would shew a preference to the creditors of the state: the conjecture was verified by the event. I am conscious that the duties prescribed by the good faith of the nation would have been felt wherever the Assembly had been held; but if we would be sincere we must acknowledge, that the vicinity of Paris has not proved injurious to this moral principle: and we shall be confirmed in this opinion, if we observe the inattention of the National Assembly to all the claims of compensation on the part of citizens robbed, by its decrees, of rights that constituted an essential part of their property.

There was an error on my part which is not known, and which for that reason I have the greater pleasure in avowing. I had recommended to the king to convoke the States

General

General at Paris even, in preference to Versailles, which his majesty refused for very good reasons: I shall not mention mine; for, independently of my respect for the king, I can have no motive to defend my opinion against his, since I take a personal interest in all the homage paid to his wisdom.

I return to the decision of council of 27th December 1788. It is not merely by the commons of France that this memorable declaration of his majesty's intentions ought to be prized; it is to the whole nation, to the present generation, and to generations yet unborn, the most signal blessing. In this declaration the king laid the first foundation of the national liberty; it was there he made known the generous sacrifice of a part of his authority, to secure for ever the happiness of France: and he did it long before the instructions given to the deputies by their constituents; he did it before the meeting of the electoral assemblies, before the meeting of the primary assemblies, before the convocation of the States General, before even that unanimity of suffrages which ascertained the current of public opinion: he did it, in short, voluntarily, freely, and in the plenitude of his influence

fluence and power. There is not one of his actions that bear such striking marks of this character; and thus the greatest of all was at the same time the most solemn of all.

It is a truth which cannot be disputed, that a nation is free, and becomes the guardian of its own happiness, when it acquires the power, or enjoys the right, of granting or refusing taxes, of approving or opposing every sort of loan, and of fixing and regulating the whole expenditure; when every reform and melioration are subject to its free controul; when all pecuniary immunities are already abjured, all acts of arbitrary authority proscribed, and the periodical meeting of the National Assemblies made an essential part of the king's engagements. But all these salutary innovations were secured before the States General entered on their deliberations, or even began to assemble. The king made no secret of his intentions: he wished to render the sacrifices he had made immutable, and was desirous of guarding from every species of revolution the political advantages the nation was about to enjoy; and he would have consented to any just measure likely to advance a plan conceived in mature wisdom, and the full and complete

complete execution of which opened before him a prospect of happiness, and a sure way of rendering his name precious to future generations.

It is then by a sort of usurpation of the gratitude of the people, that the National Assembly always speaks of happiness and liberty as conquests which it has obtained. The National Assembly has doubtless wished and effected more than had entered into the views of his majesty : but the first foundations of the constitution, those which form the keystone of the arch, were laid by the king ; to his beneficence are they to be ascribed ; and it is to be doubted whether the various sources of power grasped by the National Assembly are favourable to public happiness and true liberty.

The National Assembly also assumes, in my opinion, too much, when it ascribes to itself alone all the merit of the various individual benefits which are included in the circle of its proceedings. A considerable portion of gratitude is certainly due to it : but it is apparent, at the same time, that the reform of the enormous abuses against which public opinion had declared itself, cannot be regarded as the
appro-

appropriated work of certain individuals ; but is rather the inevitable effect of that mass of knowledge existing in twelve hundred persons selected by the nation, in the midst of an age so eminently enlightened. It is easy to calculate what such a combination must produce, but the first merit is due to the having encouraged and stimulated it. Yes, it is there the merit lies, and a merit it is that is unrivalled and unexampled. To the virtuous monarch it belongs, who, by calling around him in great numbers the representatives of the nation, forgot his personal interests, to think only how he could ascertain with certainty the wish of the whole, and consolidate the happiness he was anxious it should enjoy.

Meanwhile, in estimating the work of the National Assembly, and enumerating its claims to public gratitude, men confound what belongs to the king with what belongs to the Assembly, and form from the whole a trophy in honour of the latter. Enough would in my opinion remain with the Assembly, by giving to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.

It is true they have from time to time bestowed on the king the title of *Restorer of the Liberty of France* ; but they incessantly speak of this

this liberty as of a conquest. How these and various other ideas of a similar nature are reconciled, it is foreign to my subject to relate.

If the king had not felt in his heart the sentiments which he outwardly professed, he might easily have procrastinated the convocation of the States General. He had only to leave this vast work to its natural difficulties, and those difficulties would have furnished a pretext for directing his attention to some other plan. But government was above a policy of this sort ; and the cares it took to succeed were innumerable. All objections were obviated, all resistance was combated, all contradictions were solved ; myself placed sometimes in the centre of this immense machine, to facilitate its motion ; sometimes at the circumference, to keep it from irregularity ; and frequently at different places in a moment, in order to suspend the total ruin of which it was continually in danger, from the state of the finances, and the scarcity of corn.—I saw with inexpressible delight the period at last approach, when this grand and majestic meeting of the deputies of twenty-six millions of men was to take place, a meeting that had been unknown for two centuries ; and these centuries equivalent
to

to an immense interval, from the revolution that was wrought in the minds and manners of the nation. The memory of Frenchmen, as well as their gratitude, is limited to the present period. Preceding times, the labours that were undertaken, the fatigues that were endured, the pains and anxieties to which the mind was a prey, are all considered as nothing ; and it would be a useless employment of my time to give a catalogue of them. Such, as I have before observed, is the course of the human mind ; security from dangers, and prevention of calamities, are benefits not admitted on the records of obligation. Such a system of requital is surely neither just nor conscientious ; but it would be insolent in a minister to complain, since the majority of mankind observe no other conduct towards the Supreme Being himself. They fall on their knees, and prostrate themselves in the dust, when the thunder roars over their heads without striking them, and the lightning still flashes around them ; but when the elements are become tranquil, when the sun returns with its usual regularity to enlighten and embellish our habitations, and the early beams of Aurora cheer the earth, and compel it to yield

its fruits in abundance to our desires and our labours, we turn our eyes from this succession of blessings ; we consider their sweet and tranquil continuance as an inevitable decree, as the effect of necessity ; and we become inattentive, or indifferent and ungrateful.

The Assembly of the States General began its sittings on the 5th May, 1789. The discourse which by the king's order I delivered to them, reminded them of the extent of his generous views. I was desirous of displaying them in their full force, and for this purpose I called to my aid the energy of truth. I wished to make the virtues of the monarch the bond of union between the throne and the nation.

I informed them, in the name of the king, that his desire was to be *for ever* surrounded by the representatives of his people ; and that he hoped to be indebted to them for his highest recompence, and the most ardent object of his prayers—the public happiness, and the grandeur of the state.

I explained the immense task they were called upon to execute, and I reminded them of the anxious hopes of the nation.

I observed—" You ought not to confine
" your

“ your views to the present moment, or to a
“ slight and transient reform ; but a constant,
“ durable, and beneficial system should be the
“ fruits of your enquiries and labours. Your
“ system should correspond with the impor-
“ tance of your mission, and the purity and
“ greatness of your conceptions with the mag-
“ nitude and dignity of the confidence that is
“ placed in you. Wherever you discover the
“ possibility of increasing and securing the
“ public felicity, or perceive a trace that may
“ lead to the prosperity of the state, there
“ your attention should fix. You are, if I may
“ so say, the guardians of ages to come, and
“ it is incumbent on you to mark out the
“ path of their happiness. You should give
“ them cause to say hereafter—We owe the
“ salutary laws and institutions by which our
“ tranquillity is secured, to a beneficent king,
“ and the National Assembly that surrounded
“ him. The branches under the salutary
“ shade of which we repose ourselves, belong
“ to the tree whose first seed was planted by
“ Louis. He watered it with his generous
“ hands; and the united efforts of the nation
“ accelerated its growth, and brought it to
“ maturity.”

From

From the nature of my office it became my duty to lay open to the assembly the state of the finances. I explained therefore the general account, afterwards printed and published, which was drawn up on a new system, where all the articles of revenue and expenditure were separately classed and distinguished from each other, which has been tried by the severest criticism, and has continually served as a guide to the National Assembly, and its various committees.

Meanwhile I was not unaware that the subject of the public accounts might hereafter be carried to greater perfection, and that such a simplification might above all be expected from a National Assembly, who, being as it were the hostage and security of its own justice, might the more boldly introduce such a deviation. “ Hereafter,” said I, “ when
 “ the financial accounts shall be reduced to a
 “ more simple and perspicuous form, and a
 “ form at the same time that shall be constant
 “ and invariable, you will have no need of
 “ resorting to administration for intelligence,
 “ as the States General will have in their own
 “ possession all the materials and documents
 “ that can throw a perfect light on the fi-
 F “ nances

“ nances in general, and all the various
“ branches of which they consist.”

I told the assembly that the king had ordered his ministers to second to the utmost of their ability the desire which the deputies would feel of obtaining full and complete information upon every subject. But I know not whether I was justified in adding : “ For
“ you will not be guided in your enquiries by
“ a spirit of criticism, and aim at perfection
“ from the pleasure of depreciating the efforts
“ of administration, but that France may enjoy the inestimable advantage likely to accrue from your combined wisdom. It is easy
“ to find an error or omission in the vast
“ whole of which all the parts will be submitted to your inspection : neither the order, the method, nor the preliminary enquiries that were absolutely necessary, have
“ cost any labour to those who sit in judgment on them ; and as their minds are at rest, they can the more easily, while they
“ discuss what is well methodised and right,
“ detect such oversights as may have escaped
“ the attention of him who superintended the
“ whole.”

The king had long been conscious that arrangements

rangements and reforms above the strength of his ministers were necessary, and in which he himself stood in need of the support of the States General. This was a delicate idea to promulgate, but I introduced it notwithstanding into my discourse; and after a concise epitome of reforms that would be attended with no difficulty, I added the following words: "In short, Gentlemen, there
"are perhaps some reductions and savings,
"which, to bear the perfect stamp of reason
"and justice, it is necessary should be called
"for in the name of the assembly of the nation. These his majesty resigns to your
"consideration, from his perfect confidence in
"your wisdom and prudence."

The sentiments of the king respecting the distribution of honours made a part of my discourse, and I thus expressed these sentiments which are so justly entitled to the homage of nations. "The king, gentlemen,
"has ever adopted with pleasure and esteem
"the plans of order that were proposed to
"him, and he ardently hopes that, by giving
"new energy to the sentiments of patriotism,
"you may enhance the value of those re-
"wards, which take nothing from the royal
"treasury, draw no tears from the misery

“ of the people, and which have been un-
“ der-rated in public opinion merely in con-
“ sequence of those depraved sentiments, which
“ have too often united the seeming desire
“ of distinction with the love of money.”

While I expressed the aversion of the king to every species of abuse, I at the same time informed the assembly in the most unequivocal terms, of the respect he felt for the engagements into which he had entered. I defended the cause of the creditors of the state, and placed their interests under the guardianship of national honour and public faith. I beg leave to cite the words I employed on the occasion. Not that I am desirous of robbing the National Assembly of the merit to which they are entitled, and the applause they have obtained on the same subject : there is room for us all in the temple of justice and morality, which as yet is far from being too much crowded. I shall transcribe the whole paragraph ; it will bear perhaps a second reading.

“ Can it be necessary that the king should
“ assign his reasons for not including a reduc-
“ tion of the interest of the public debt among
“ the means to be used for restoring the equi-
“ librium of the finances ? Need he justify a
“ measure

“ measure of this kind to the States General,
“ the representatives of a nation celebrated for
“ its sentiments of honour? Surely not. There
“ is a sacredness about every engagement ;
“ and when it is the faith of a sovereign, the
“ head and guardian of a nation’s rights, that
“ is pledged, and pledged too for the purpose
“ of supplying the extraordinary exigencies of
“ a war ; when its object has been to exempt
“ the property of the nation from a subsidy,
“ which it would otherwise have been impos-
“ sible to raise, no matter what was the object
“ of the subsidy, the obligation becomes in-
“ violable. The king cannot on the one hand
“ sanction and secure the engagements of in-
“ dividuals, while on the other he violates the
“ ties he has contracted, the promises he has
“ given, and the regular and appointed for-
“ malities established for that purpose. Let
“ wiser precautions be taken in future ; it is the
“ hope and desire of his majesty : but at so
“ solemn a period as the present, when the
“ nation is called round the throne, not for a
“ moment, but for a perpetuity, to co-operate
“ with the views and wishes of the king, it
“ should warmly countenance the sentiments
“ of honour and fidelity by which his heart

“ is animated ; sentiments without which the
“ finer bonds that unite mankind are annihi-
“ lated, and they are no longer held together
“ but by violence and constraint. There is
“ no need that the first fruits of the restoration
“ of France should be tarnished by breach of
“ faith. The deliberations of the most august
“ assembly upon earth should be stamped with
“ no other seal than that of perfect reason and
“ justice. This ought for ever to be the seal
“ of political engagements. Every thing else
“ may undergo changes and revolutions ; but
“ while men are fortified with these great
“ principles, a valid reason for despondence
“ can never exist. The protection granted
“ by the king to the creditors of the state, and
“ his unimpeached fidelity, will one day be
“ an exalted monument of his moral cha-
“ racter ; as he might have violated these
“ principles without standing in need of any
“ extraordinary assistance, and without being
“ responsible for the various consequences that
“ would have followed. This perhaps is the
“ first advice that the blind advocates of au-
“ thority, the modern Machiavels, would have
“ been eager to give him. His majesty feels
“ more dignity and satisfaction in co-operat-
“ ing

“ing with you, gentlemen, to render the
“immutable principles of probity and justice
“for ever sacred ; he feels more pleasure in
“respecting them than he could derive from
“all the splendid enjoyments of a throne, and
“the exercise of unlimited power, which
“would lose its value when it was no longer
“employed in the support of justice.”

To these general reflections I added others calculated to enforce the political importance of fulfilling in all cases the engagements of the state, and I proved how ill founded were the advantages proposed to be derived from arbitrary reductions of interest.

I also thought it necessary to inform the assembly that the disproportion between the revenue and expenditure might have been obviated without any retrenchment of interest of the public debt, without having recourse to any new taxes, or employing any other means than what were to be found in the ordinary documents of administration.

From this truth I drew an important inference : that, as far as the finances only were concerned, the king might have dispensed with convoking the States General. The National Assembly has always been displeased

with this part of my discourse. I am at a loss for the reason of its displeasure, unless it is to be ascribed to the desire it has shewn to hold all its advantages from the gift of necessity. Meanwhile, would the work of the constitution have lost its value, would it have appeared less dignified and worthy of esteem, if it had been the result of a pleasing and desirable harmony between the wishes of the sovereign and those of the nation? It is probably from a neglect of this idea in the outset, that every thing they have undertaken has been by violence, and that they have gone beyond the purpose they intended.

In taking a retrospect of former transactions, it is painful to me to remember how completely my hopes were disappointed when, elate with joy at being able to declare how little ground there was for the clamour that had been raised respecting the enormous deficit and inextricable embarrassment of the finances, and anticipating the impression the unexpected intelligence would make on the assembly, I experienced only its coldness and silence. Alas! I have had full conviction how erroneous it is, in addressing mankind, to calculate only from the principles and feelings

ings of our own hearts ; we ought to take the passions and weakneses of men into the account, and proportion our hopes to the sombre prospect they afford.

The restoring the true balance of the finances was but a part of what was requisite to be done. It was necessary to keep them in this state, to preserve them from “ the injuries of time and the faults of men, and especially from the errors of every minister and agent in whom the sovereign of a great empire is obliged to confide.” It was in this manner the king ordered me to express myself, and I explained the judicious reasons which induced his majesty to wish that this care should devolve on the representatives of the nation.

“ His majesty,” said I, “ ever actuated by a spirit of wisdom, justice, and beneficence, has taken the present state of public affairs into consideration, and examined it in its utmost extent. He has observed that the people, terrified at the embarrassment of the finances and the situation to which credit is reduced, are anxious to see order and confidence restored in a way that shall not prove temporary, or be dependent on such various changes as have lately taken place.

“ This

“ This desire of the nation he conceives to be
“ perfectly just ; and with a view of gratify-
“ ing it, and obtaining so interesting an object,
“ he has thought it necessary to appoint new
“ trustees of the public security, and to place
“ the finances under the safeguard, if I may
“ so say, of the whole kingdom.”

Such was the language I employed in the name of the king ; and, having first made the sacrifice of the credit and influence attached to the distinguished office I held, I concluded this part of my discourse with these striking words : “ Let us unite our efforts, Gentle-
“ men ; it is the king’s will ; let us unite our
“ efforts so to arrange things, that in future
“ the most common understanding may be
“ able to transact the business of the treasury,
“ and that no danger may be feared from the
“ most inauspicious subtlety.”

It was the first object of my wishes to see the happiness of the nation and the prosperity of the empire secured in a manner that should no longer be precarious. To give to the subjects of France the character of citizens, I conceived to be the likeliest means of accomplishing it ; and time will prove whether I was deceived in so strongly enforcing the necessity

cessity of uniting prudence and circumspection with zeal for the public good.

“ It is necessary to avoid giving the enemies of public peace and national prosperity, the hope which must inevitably result from the want of harmony between the different powers that dispose of the destiny of France. You will consider the situation of the kingdom ; what it is and what it ought to be in the political balance of Europe : and in fixing your attention on the ancient lustre of the most respectable monarchy in the world, you will extend your view ; and, not satisfied with the momentary acclamations of the people of France, you will be ambitious of obtaining the deliberate applause of all foreign nations, of those nations whose decision, unbiaſſed by paſſion, may be regarded as the judgment of poſterity ; of those nations who, considering you as in the volume of history, will believe none of your measures to be permanent, if you lose sight of what the circumstances of the empire irresistibly demand at your hands.

“ You will therefore avoid all wild systems, restrain the illusions of the fancy, and
“ be

“ be diffident of every novel doctrine. You
“ will not suppose the future to have no con-
“ nection with the past ; you will not prefer
“ projects and declamations, which may lead
“ you into an ideal world, to those proposi-
“ tions and designs, which, less dazzling, but
“ more practicable, are exposed to fewer con-
“ tests, and give strength and duration to the
“ good we effect. In short, you will not be
“ envious of the triumphs of time, but will
“ leave something for time to effect ; since, by
“ attempting to reform at once every thing
“ that shall appear defective, your own work
“ will itself become imperfect. It is easy to
“ perceive that, in a complicated administra-
“ tion, the just proportion of its parts is over-
“ looked by the most accurate observers,
“ when the whole is constructed at a single
“ experiment, and there is nothing but abstract
“ fitnesses to insure its duration.”

In looking at the events that have happened, we are struck with the singularity of this and various other passages of the same discourse. There seems also to be something prophetic in the warmth with which I recommended concord and unanimity, so necessary to the advancement of public happiness.

“ Be

“ Be unanimous,” said I, “ in so important
 “ an enterprize, that you may not disappoint
 “ the wish of the nation ; be unanimous, that
 “ you may merit the attention of Europe ; be
 “ unanimous, that you may without fear trans-
 “ mit your names to posterity, and secure be-
 “ forehand the scrutinizing approbation of
 “ future generations. You are perhaps about
 “ to decide the fate of these innumerable ge-
 “ nerations, and they will demand of you an
 “ account. Your competitions, your indivi-
 “ dual claims, your personal disputes, will in
 “ the immensity of space disappear like a flash
 “ of lightning, and will leave no trace in the
 “ succession of ages ; but the principles of
 “ union and felicity that you shall cherish,
 “ will become the record and as it were the
 “ eternal trophy of your labours and your
 “ patriotism.”

I have always derived strength from the principles of morality ; I have uniformly recommended them as a guide to persons occupied in affairs of state ; and I hesitated not to point out the same beacon to the deputies of France assembled for the purpose of rearing the fabric of its felicity. It was thus I expressed myself : “ A great diversity and exten-

“ five

“ five series of benefits will necessarily result
“ from the fundamental principle of fidelity
“ which you will transmit as sacred. It is the
“ beautiful and proud patrimony of public and
“ private virtue; it is the prolific trunk which
“ throws out an infinite number of branches all
“ bearing in time salutary fruit. In a discourse
“ sanctioned by the king, and delivered by
“ his command, what pleasure must it give
“ you to hear, that there is but one great na-
“ tional policy, but one principle of order, of
“ durability, and of happiness, and that this
“ principle is that of the strictest morality ! It
“ is by deviating from it that we are so fre-
“ quently obliged to change our principle of
“ action; and that we mistake for skill what is
“ nothing more than the art of extricating
“ ourselves from difficulties of our own creat-
“ ing, and of consequence involving ourselves
“ in others that require new efforts and new
“ expedients ; whereas in the exercise of truth
“ and honesty every thing goes on easily,
“ firmly, connectedly, and proclaims the har-
“ monious system to be the genuine work of
“ the Supreme Being.”

I shall proceed no farther in the recapitulation

BM.

tion I proposed to give of my sentiments, at the opening of the States General. It is doubtless time I should stop, for I no longer feel the same confidence in myself in the revival of ideas tinctured with morality and feeling. I cannot tell the source of my distrust; but I fear that the opinions of mankind have undergone a revolution, and that some uncommon alteration has taken place in our moral atmosphere.

The calamity is of no ordinary magnitude. We could ill spare, in the usual course of events, and in the midst of the battles of interest, that ardent expansion of soul that alone could calm the storms of life. What then will now become of us, if, hardened by the view of the severity, the unkindness, the cruelty that is daily exhibited, we no longer acknowledge any power but that of argument, any empire but that which is narrowed and extended at pleasure, and which we carefully construct of such transitory materials as that passion may overbear and volition annihilate it? They know little of mankind who think to govern them by such a spring. These political navigators may talk as they please; the intrepidity of their tone has no effect upon
me,

me, and I boldly cite them before the bar of posterity, there to be arraigned for their unfeelingness, their injustice, and their ingratitude; there to vindicate their ostentatious contempt for the decision of unadulterated feeling and the moral principles of common sense.

In the mean time I am disposed to combat and have no doubt to repel this disdainful superiority in their own way and with their own weapons; and, lowering therefore the statesman to the office of a disputant, I shall go on answering the various arguments and objections of our political declaimers.

The chief disadvantage of my situation is, that I am encompassed by all sorts of extravagant ideas, and have to defend myself at once against the violent passions of two opposite parties. For example, they all censure me for the manner in which I expressed myself as to the union of the three Orders. One party would have had me enforce in the most unequivocal language the absolute necessity of this union, while the other wished the idea to be rejected without the least reserve.

Another difficulty arising from my situation is the being obliged to relate indiscriminately my conduct and my discourses, without noticing

ting the important distinction that sometimes exists between the private opinions of the minister and the conduct he pursues. The former of these are independent and truly his own; it is not always the same with the latter.

But omitting a remark which motives of respect will not permit me to exemplify, I content myself with observing that in my discourse at the opening of the States General I was authorised by the king to go a step beyond the regulations specified in the report of council of 27 December 1788. The intentions of the monarch respecting the permanency of the States General, and the powers that were to be accorded to them, were in the first place more fully explained; and I was permitted to inform the two first Orders that the public good absolutely required that there should be a deliberation in common as to every object of national concern: but with what respect and forbearance did I endeavour to secure them the merit of this union, and what care I took that they should have all the honour resulting from the abdication of their pecuniary privileges! A second perusal of this part of my speech to the States General will

prove whether it were possible to act with greater decorum in pursuit of a just object, or to employ a language suited more exactly to the disposition of men's minds and the circumstances of the moment. Had the two first Orders been equally desirous of making the same allowances, and had the third shewn more patience and forbearance, how many troubles and calamities would have been prevented! This painful idea recurs continually when we look back on past events.

The day that assembled the deputies of France was nevertheless glorious and august. It was particularly glorious, if we contrast the calamitous and divided state that preceded it, with the emotion that the aspect of such an assembly inspired; an assembly placed in dignified regularity round their king, engrossing the attention and prayers of their country, and anticipating the triumph that awaited the success of their labours. It was indeed a glorious day for him, whose business it was to be the interpreter of truth in the midst of this temple of liberty, this fabric that shall for ever perpetuate the virtues of the monarch. In fine, it was a day unspeakably splendid for him, who was to pronounce as it were the solemn
inauguration

inauguration of a commencing and perennial felicity.

It remains for the justice of mankind and the impartiality of Europe to decide whether I performed the task assigned me with propriety and dignity. In reading again my discourse at this distant period, it appears to me to coincide with the existing circumstances of the times, and with others which were not then foreseen; and I find in it not a single sentiment or expression which a faithful minister, an honest citizen, and a wise man, might not with confidence have avowed.

The States General began their sittings: but before I take a review of my conduct subsequent to that period, I shall employ a single moment, which is truly painful, in reflecting on the sad necessity which imposes upon me the undertaking. The violent oppression of my enemies irresistibly incites me; but I am not on that account the less sensible how repugnant and distressing it is to my feelings. It is necessary, for my own consolation, and for the sake of truth, that I should associate in all the cares, in all the circumspection, which, during the sittings of the States General, the events

of everyday rendered necessary, a man to whom I was inseparably attached after my return to administration, and who was a new friend to me, though, when I saw the excellence of his mind and the sincerity of his character, he seemed, from the similarity of our sentiments, to have been an old acquaintance. It is M. de Montmorin, a true citizen, though possessing the confidence of his sovereign, and from his infancy contributing to his happiness and glory. What efforts have we not made together to secure the permanence of a liberty that should not pass the bounds of wisdom, to defend it sometimes against the storms by which it was threatened, and sometimes against exaggerations which weakened its basis, and of which we foresaw all the danger! To the king we endeavoured to exculpate, or rather we palliated proceedings at which he might have taken umbrage; and to the deputies in the National Assembly we employed a language calculated to silence their distrusts, and to bring back the most vehement to moderate opinions. In short; constant spectators of the animosities and dissensions which so early displayed themselves in the National Assembly, we devoted our whole attention to the means

means of conciliating them, and directing the general sentiment to the public good.

I entertained some hope when I succeeded in establishing a conference between a number of committees chosen by the three Orders; and which was to be held in the presence of the king's ministers. The first question to be discussed was the important one of the verification of the powers. But a stop was put to every thing by a misunderstanding on a point which it was previously necessary to settle; and in the course of the dispute the minds of the negociators became every moment more inflamed. It was of the highest importance to effect a reconciliation, without which nothing could be done for the public good; but many conferences were occupied in long debates, in which each party shewed the most zealous attachment to the unqualified support of its rights and principles.

At last, authorised by his majesty, I opened a way of accommodation that was so reasonable, and coincided so completely with the claims of the opposing parties, that all ought, one would think, to have accepted it. The attempt however was fruitless; and as the issue of this conference has produced the most

serious consequences, it will not, I conceive, be uninteresting to call them to mind. We shall see how the first and almost imperceptible lines of disunion frequently lead to variances of which it is impossible to stop the progress.

The Noblesse and the Clergy were desirous that each of the Chambers should examine separately and without the concurrence of the other two the validity of the election of the deputies of its own Order, and the legality of the powers committed to them.

The Tiers-Etat on the contrary insisted that this examination should be made in an assembly of the three Orders combined.

Neither party would yield in the smallest degree to the claims of its opponents, when his majesty's ministers interfered, and took a decided part in the dispute.

It was certainly for the interest of the three Orders that no party should abuse its power by admitting or rejecting with partiality the deputies who came to claim their seats in the States General. This interest was indisputable, if the Orders were to deliberate in common; it was equally apparent on the supposition that they were to deliberate separately, since the
formation

formation of one division of a legislative body could not be indifferent to any of the rest.

In the mean time fears were entertained of the preponderance of the Tiers-Etat, if the absolute decision of the elections were to devolve on the three Orders united ; and I made myself an observation that was new upon this subject. “ It was by no means included in
 “ the proposed concession that the Tiers-Etat
 “ should have an influence calculated to in-
 “ crease the number of their adherents ; this
 “ would have been to destroy their propor-
 “ tionable share in the balance of the consti-
 “ tution, and to have attributed to them an
 “ inequitable and oppressive tendency to a per-
 “ petual increase of their consequence.”

It resulted from these difficulties that the decision of the disputes respecting the validity of the elections properly devolved on him whose province it had been to fix the respective number of deputies of the three Orders ; and the example of preceding times was in favour of this opinion. It was this which led me to say in the conference : “ that
 “ the three Orders, who complied with the
 “ decision of the king in fixing the number of
 “ deputies, would make but a frivolous ex-
 G 4 “ ception

“ ception if they refused to admit him as the
 “ arbitrator of the very few contests that could
 “ arise as to the verification of the powers.
 “ The true interest of his majesty, and the
 “ only interest that actuates him, is the love
 “ of union; and he is in this instance worthy
 “ of being your arbitrator, however unwilling
 “ you may be, as a general principle, to ad-
 “ mit the monarch as the judge.”

The king however not wishing to preserve
 any greater portion of his right than was ne-
 cessary for the removal of difficulties, I made
 to the committee of the three Orders a pro-
 posal of so unexceptionable a nature that I
 shall transcribe it word for word, without
 omitting the few sentences of recommendation
 with which it was accompanied.

“ The three Orders might, by an act of
 “ free and liberal confidence, mutually refer
 “ the verification of the powers, in cases
 “ where any difficulty arose, and communicate
 “ to each other the documents and evidence
 “ for the purpose of a rapid and general
 “ review.

“ They may farther agree ;

“ That any disputes which might arise
 “ should

“ should be referred to the examination of a
“ committee selected from the three Orders :

“ That this committee should make a re-
“ port of their opinion :

“ That this report should be laid before the
“ Chambers respectively :

“ That if it were approved, it should be
“ considered as final :

“ That if, on the contrary, the decision of
“ the Orders were in opposition to it, and
“ there was no probability of conciliating the
“ dispute, the business should be referred to
“ the king, whose judgment should be final.

“ They might farther agree, that this mode
“ of determining the verification of the powers,
“ should have nothing to do with the grand
“ question of deliberating in common, or in
“ separate Orders; they might add that the
“ proceeding adopted upon the present oc-
“ casion should be resumed in the course of
“ the session, to consider if any better mode
“ can be devised as to the future ; and they
“ might add any other precautions that might
“ be thought expedient : but let this or some
“ other means of conciliation be adopted, and
“ let not the king be the only person in the
“ nation continually interesting himself in
“ the

“ the establishment of peace and unanimity.
“ What true citizen can refuse to comply with
“ the wishes of the best of kings, who sees
“ with the deepest concern the many calamities that may arise from dissensions in the
“ first step of a career to which the welfare of
“ the state calls you, in which the nation is
“ anxious to see you proceed, and where
“ the greatest dangers encompass you? Alas!
“ could you even accomplish this welfare by
“ variance of opinion and animosities of heart,
“ it would be bought too dear. The king
“ then invites you to take into consideration
“ his proposal, and he earnestly entreats you
“ to give him the satisfaction that will result
“ from your accepting it.”

It is difficult to conceive how so rational a proposition, made in so becoming a manner, in which the king no farther interfered than was necessary to conciliate the minds of the representatives, could be rejected. That the deputies of the Commons, conscious of the power with which public opinion had invested them, should see with pleasure the refusal of the Noblesse and the Clergy, is not to be wondered at; but that the two higher Orders should not have felt the propriety of setting

an example of deference to the conciliatory views of the king, a deference that, at this critical period, would have been followed by that of the Commons, is a degree of impolicy that cannot well be explained. How many reasons had they for pursuing a different conduct! It was a mere punctilio that prevented them; but this punctilio was not less the cause of the breaking up of the conferences, a circumstance to which a considerable series of events may be imputed.

An assembly of men met together for public affairs, offers to the mind of the spectator a variety of reflections. I believe that a set of negociators, brought together for the purpose of adjusting a controversy, can scarcely be expected to agree when they are merely the representatives of representatives; and such was the committee appointed by the national deputies. There is need somewhere of a centre of communication to harmonize the feelings; there is need, either in the elector or the elected, of some general medium for reconciling distant interests, vague ideas, and prospects of the future, since in the war of the passions it is only by future and not by momentary

mentary interests, that they can be reconciled and united.

This and other observations have convinced me of the inutility of conferences in general with a certain number of deputies. The discussion should take place in the midst of an assembly whose deliberations were final, if we would produce any salutary influence on the opinions of men. We ought to combat against the general passions, the only ones against which we can make a regular attack, the only ones against which it is honourable to have to struggle, the only ones with which reason and genius can worthily treat.

Such is the situation of English ministers, and such hereafter will be those of France, unless it is the desire to reduce them to a level with clerks of the National Assembly, and they are themselves so servile as to submit to the degradation.

For my own part, I have been subjected to every difficulty of situation of which it is possible to form an idea. I could find in history no example to assist me; and my duties, the critical state of affairs, and the disposition of the public mind, were continually opening before me a new and unbeaten path. Placed
between

between the throne and the nation, between the disrepute of old and the pride of new opinions, between obsolete maxims of policy and the necessity of innovation and reform, between the imperious yoke of habits and the impetuosity of revolutions, between the fixed science of past experience and the irregular succession of the most unforeseen events; in short, between the obligations of the present period and those of virtues which are eternal, there was danger every day of my committing some error, and error perhaps of the most fatal tendency. It was a reflection I often made with my colleagues in office: but, though I am unfortunately mistrustful of myself, though I have all my life been in the habit of looking back on the transactions in which I have been concerned to correct my first judgment, and though my mind is thus haunted with apprehensions, in which my conscience has no share, I can nevertheless say, and it is to my own astonishment, that I seek in vain for cause of self reproach. Other men may think differently, not only from a party spirit, but because they are ignorant of the difficulties that were continually springing up on every side, because they are unacquainted with the various precautions

precautions which known and unknown circumstances rendered necessary. These peculiarities of situation escape the notice of the generality of spectators, who seldom take the pains to inquire into them, or trace their connection with the leading views of the minister. Men of moderate talents would in vain attempt it: their narrow understandings can take in but one simple idea at a time, or at best but a postulate and a conclusion, and the immense space between is an unknown country in which they are bewildered.

I wish only to call to mind the principal transactions of my second administration, and I must do this with brevity, as, in the busy scenes in which men are engaged, little time will be given to things that are passed: a reflection that would totally discourage me, if it were for the present moment only I had undertaken to write.

The dispute respecting the verification of powers continued to divide the three Orders, and a concussion of a still more violent kind was added to it, which arose from the desire of the Commons for a single house of deliberation, and the contrary demand on the part
of

of the Noblesse and the Clergy of a separate one for each Order. All hopes of reconciliation were annihilated, the minds of the contending parties were every day more inflamed, and the business of the state was suspended. Every good citizen was alarmed at this stagnation, while among the parties some hoped that it would bring on a dissolution of the States General, and others that it would serve as a pretext for the adoption of more decisive measures, for which they were ripe, completely to overturn the constitution.

In a situation like this, the silence and inactivity of the monarch would neither have been becoming, nor consistent with dignity. The king could not be an indifferent spectator of the dangers which threatened the state; he had already tried in vain to effect an accommodation by the interposition of his ministers, and it was time for him to appear in a different character. It was my opinion that he would act wisely, by granting to the two first Orders a right of deliberating separately respecting measures which affected only their individual and personal concerns, and obliging them to unite with the Commons as to every thing which regarded the general interest, and particularly

ticularly the formation of future National Assemblies. I conceived that the king ought at the same time, both on his own account and for the good of the state, to confirm in an authentic manner his acquiescence in all the regulations contained in the report of council of 27 December 1788 ; that he ought even to extend his declaration still farther, and so meet the general wishes of the nation. Among other particulars I had included in this new report of the beneficent views of his majesty, the admission of all citizens to civil and military offices ; the annihilation of the rights of servitude, in imitation of what he had himself renounced as to his own domains ; the power of redeeming burthenesome services at a stipulated price, and other objects of a similar kind, observing at the same time the strictest justice towards the proprietors. In short, in speaking of the new constitution, the king merely expressed his opinion of the propriety and necessity of having two chambers, and that, as to every thing else, he referred himself to the views that should be presented to him by the National Assembly.

The result of the whole of my ideas was that the king, by preserving what belonged to
his

his own dignity, and by prudently yielding beforehand to the law of necessity, would put the States General again in motion, and essentially serve the two first Orders by giving them an opportunity of honourably renouncing the arbitrary system they had embraced, and which circumstances would not permit them to maintain. The proceeding I advised was doubtless delicate; but something was necessary to be done, and something that should unite the Orders into one assembly, and put a stop, in a regular or at least peaceable manner, to the state of division which every moment threatened to bring upon us the greatest calamities. In short, I had accompanied the several articles of this plan with every thing that was likely to gain it a favourable reception with the public; but to judge properly of it at present, we ought to be able by the medium of recollection to go back to the epocha of the beginning of June 1789; we ought to have an accurate idea of the uncertainty and agitation, the hopes and fears, and the general situation of the minds of men, at that period as yet so little distant from the opening of the States General: but it would

be difficult to do this at a time when a crowd of events have led much farther than was intended by the advice I gave; and we must pardon the two first Orders, or their agents at court, for so warmly opposing a measure, which, with a little more foresight, they would have found consistent with true wisdom. I had but one moment of hope, and that was when I explained my ideas to the council, and was heard favourably by the king; for I was soon attacked in every possible way. It was universally agreed that it was necessary for the king to interfere, but they wished it to be with a very different spirit; and by degrees, appearing at the same time to preserve a part of my plan, they took away every thing that was essential to it, and that could make it acceptable to the Commons. They adopted here and there some of my expressions, at the beginning and the end; but, by a singularity that was remarkable, the style I had employed, which was firm and elevated, and which was peculiarly proper, when the monarch was enjoining the two first Orders to unite with the Commons in the important work of the public good, they conceived to be equally applicable

to

to a proceeding of a directly contrary spirit, and the effect produced by it was awkward in the extreme.

I defended my own ideas, and controverted the new project with my utmost ability. I resisted firmly the opinion of the princes who took a part in the discussion; and preserving to the last moment the hope that reason would be triumphant, I at length reflected how it became me to act as to myself; and my opinion was, after mature deliberation and various struggles with my feelings, which the seriousness of the occasion authorized, that I could neither with honour be present at the sitting of 23 June, nor continue any longer in administration. My situation was equally painful and embarrassing; on the morning of this memorable day the agitation of my mind still continued; and if I did not inform the king of my final determination, it was solely from the fear of receiving a positive command, which it would have been impossible for me to obey.

The general commotion which was excited in the Commons and in Paris, by this step of the king and his declaration in the National

Assembly, cannot be forgotten. The persons who had advised his majesty, were eager to attribute this commotion to my absence from the assembly; but on men of discernment such an insinuation could have no effect. The public opinion in important transactions is not determined by a single circumstance; the project of 23d June proved abortive for the very reasons I had predicted; and it was neither in my power nor in that of any other person to have supported such a measure. I will go farther, and say that it was my absence from the assembly which mollified in some degree the irritation of the Commons and the discontent of the public, because they quickly inferred from it that some of the council had been inimical to the proceeding; and the proofs of kindness and confidence which I received the same day from the king having determined me to keep my place, all doubts respecting his majesty's intentions were quickly dispelled; and thus by my conduct on this occasion I secured the power of serving both the king and the nation.

I withstood the solicitations of many judicious friends, better versed than myself in
the

the court and in its intrigues, who advised me to resign, assuring me that I should soon fall a victim to the influence of those whose counsels had in so serious and important a business prevailed over mine.

I was equally deaf to the insinuations of those who considered my resignation as the æra of a signal revolution, and who wished me to understand that such a determination on my part would soon be followed by the most splendid triumph,

The attempts were renewed with as little success when it was known that I had tried in vain to procure the dismissal of the ministers whose opposition to my projects was openly avowed. My intimate friends will do me the justice to say that I was perfectly acquainted with the dangers that surrounded me; these dangers were not new to me, as I had long lived in the midst of every species of inquietude. I also perceived the extremity to which we were reduced for want of provisions, and I perceived it with such conviction, that, returning to my house in the evening of 23d June attended with the acclamations of the multitude, I said to a few friends who were

with me in my cabinet: "I comply—But
" this very people, who now follow me with
" their benedictions, will, perhaps, before
" the expiration of a fortnight, attack me
" with stones." Meanwhile in spite of my
fears, and notwithstanding the various recommendations with which my retreat was attended, I persisted in discarding the idea. My presence I conceived was necessary in the critical situation of affairs, and I thought myself still able to render some service to the public.

I delayed not to avail myself of the momentary revival of my credit to engage his majesty to write to the Noblesse and the Clergy the letter which effected the union of the three Orders; but the plan I had proposed for this purpose, previous to the *Séance Royale*, was no longer practicable. The agitation and tumult that prevailed, the circumstances that were known to every body, and others of which we have since been informed by private channels, in short a state of crisis, which is still present to my mind, made the union of the Orders indispensable; and if the deputies of the Clergy and the Noblesse had been desirous of giving
8 their

their secret opinions on the subject, they must have acknowledged, that, in the singular predicament in which they were placed, the king consulted their true interests by inducing them honourably to acquiesce in a measure, which it was impossible for them to avoid.

Be this however as it may, the union of the Orders, which ought to be considered as the æra when the labours of the representatives of the nation commenced, this union which prevented the greatest calamities, this union so ardently desired by every good citizen, was celebrated at Versailles, at Paris, and throughout the kingdom by three days illuminations, and nothing was to be seen but the most splendid demonstrations of public joy.

Meanwhile whoever will take the trouble to examine the particulars of my conduct, will ever find me most active in those circumstances in which the nation at large most deeply interested itself, and in those decisions that were best calculated to ascertain the preservation or re-establishment of general tranquillity.

I had entered on the duties of my new engagement, free from distrust, and with a zeal

that knew no bounds ; and I freely confess, so necessary did I suppose myself to public affairs, that I was more astonished than any person at the king's determination of 11th July. I was ignorant, it is true, of the science of intrigue ; I had never studied it. I had placed my strength on other means, and I had always disdained even to look at those by-paths, where depraved courtiers plan the defeat of a virtuous statesman, and concert the ruin of a minister whose character thwarts their designs. I should have blushed at feeling any anxiety to discover the secret of such artifices, and I had no leisure for the study.

I shall not relate the events which followed my retreat from office, they are known to all Europe ; I did not expect that it would have produced so astonishing effects, but it was sufficient that I believed in the possibility of some remarkable impression to induce me carefully to avoid every thing by which it might be excited or increased. I was therefore solely intent on punctually observing the order of his majesty, which was to withdraw myself without noise. I received the order a little after three o'clock, and so successfully did I exert myself

myself to restrain my emotion before the company who dined with me, that no one perceived the sensations by which my heart was rent. On rising from table I confided to madam Necker alone the orders I had received, and at half after five we got into the carriage without changing our dress, and without any preparation or precaution. We ordered the coachman, according to our usual custom, to take us a short excursion; and after we were at the distance of two hundred yards, having first stopped a moment to ask our attendants if they were disposed to accompany us out of the kingdom, we took the way to the first post town. My daughter and my most intimate friends were ignorant of our route till the next morning. We travelled night and day: we made no stop; and madam Necker, notwithstanding her weakness from ill health, displaying nothing but courage, we performed the journey from Versailles to Bruxelles with an expedition equal to that of post dispatches. Two officers, who had received secret orders to follow us, gave on their return a similar account of our journey.

Such was the conduct of the minister,
who,

who, in the lying portraits sketched by writers of the present day, is represented as a man of the most restless policy and the most stubborn ambition. Meanwhile, before his disgrace, he alone was blind to the machinations of his enemies, he alone had no faith in the success of their intrigues ; and the moment he was informed of the king's determination, far from seeking to create disturbance, far from wishing to interest the feelings of any one, he withdrew himself with as much diligence as secrecy, not merely from the court, not merely from the capital, but from the kingdom, from a country to which he had consecrated his labours and his life. Such ambition, such policy, is not at least of the kind we have been accustomed to observe.

It was after having travelled across the whole German dominions to go to my estate at the foot of Mount Jura, that, arrived at Bâle, I received two letters which every body is acquainted with, one from the king, the other from the National Assembly, inviting me to return and resume my office at the helm of affairs. My mind still agitated, my soul alive to the events which I had just experienced,

having

having no longer a wish but for retirement, and embellishing already my future life with the spoils of the past, I was like a man stunned, I confess, when I considered the sudden change of all my prospects, and the retrograde course which my thoughts must pursue. I did not however hesitate. It was easy to perceive that I exposed my reputation to new hazards, at the moment that events independent of my own determination had placed it in safety: but a moral principle, a principle of duty determined me; and soon, more devoted than ever to my inviolable love for France, I believed myself to be actuated by no other sentiment.

Care however has been taken to ascribe to personal considerations the most generous sacrifice, a sacrifice which induced me to place myself in the midst of the dangers of an intestine war, to return knowingly to the horrors of famine, and, with a mind of gentleness and feeling, to mix again in events already marked with ferocious and sanguinary features.

Alas! after having withdrawn from France with so much pliability and discretion, after returning with such submission, such alacrity, such zeal, such self oblivion, I had never supposed that within the revolution of a single year,

year, every day of which could tell of some new service I had done, I should have cause to shed bitter tears over the injustice and ingratitude of those from whom I asked no other return than kindness for a disinterestedness that is without example.

Let us however resume the narrative of my conduct, and trace with a melancholy pencil the series of recent events. I returned into France, and at the very outset I exerted my endeavour, at sight of the excesses that were every where committed, to calm the minds of the multitude. I stopped every instant on the road, and, by means of exhortations and the most earnest entreaties, I strove to diffuse a spirit of peace and sentiments of mildness and conciliation ; availing myself at the same time of the proofs of attachment they shewed me, to excite a horror at violence and injustice. I had frequently the good fortune to produce some effect, and the promises I demanded and obtained mingled themselves at the bottom of my heart with their benedictions. Ah! with what ecstasy did I then feel the almighty power of virtue ! How lovely was its authority ! and how did it embellish in my eyes the people that submitted to it !

I met

I met on my way a considerable number of Frenchmen, whom the events at Paris and the assassinations committed near the Hôtel-de-Ville had chilled with horror and affright, and who were going to seek a retreat in another country. I then first learned those bloody scenes, and my eyes wet with tears turned towards Bâle.—It was too late! I looked up to heaven, and I ardently invoked its aid that I might succeed in converting a mistaken people from their blind barbarities, in reclaiming them to sentiments of humanity, and in effacing the stain which their guilty violences had cast on the character of the nation.

Occupied with these reflections, I took upon myself on the road to suspend the orders which had been given for conducting a prisoner * to Paris, who was the object of public attention and who would not at such a moment have escaped the popular fury. The tribunals have since pronounced him innocent; and thus, by preserving him from the first excesses of an irritated people, I have saved them at the same time from an additional cause of remorse. Meanwhile this kind of daring

* M. de Bezenval.

measure, which had been dictated by the confidence I felt, I was afterwards obliged to explain and defend, and this was the principal object of my speech of 30th July in the assembly of the Hôtel-de-Ville. How great and happy a day for me! What a pleasant and memorable epocha does it form in my life! After receiving on the part of an immense multitude the most flattering proofs of attachment, I obtained from their numerous deputies assembled at the Hôtel-de-Ville, and afterwards from the people themselves, accompanied with shouts of joy, not only the perfect freedom of the prisoner I had defended, but a complete oblivion of every cause of grievance and suspicion, a general abjuration of the sentiments of animosity and revenge with which their minds had been hurried away, and a sort of peace and reconciliation with that large body of citizens, some of whom had already left their country and others were on the point of withdrawing. This honourable determination, which seemed as it were to purify the atmosphere and annihilate all traces of the storm, was the fruit of my tears. I demanded it in the name of the enthusiasm they felt for me at the moment;

ment ; I demanded it as a recompence for the sacrifice I had made, and the only recompence I wished ever to receive. I fell on my knees, I humbled myself in every possible way to succeed ; I exerted in short all the powers of my mind, and, seconded by the eloquence of a humane and generous citizen *, I obtained the object of my prayers, which was granted with a unanimous voice and all the enthusiastic fervour that could render it still dearer to my heart. People of France, how great did you appear on this day ! How did the sentiments of magnanimity you displayed prove you worthy of liberty, and exalt you to the character of citizens ! How did your various feelings and successive emotions recal to the observation of Europe that happy mixture of urbane manners and sensibility of character for which you had so long been celebrated ! I beg leave to transcribe in this place the resolution of the general assembly of electors chosen by the commonalty of Paris. It is not for myself, whose triumph has been short, that I wish to do this, but for you virtuous citizens who crowded the halls of the Hôtel-de-Ville, it is

* M. de Clermont-Tonnerre.

in honour of you and to place your names apart and out of the reach of those scenes of horror with which posterity will one day reproach the age in which you live.

“ HÔTEL-DE-VILLE.

“ GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF ELECTORS.

“ 30th July 1789.

“ In consequence of the just, sublime, and
“ pathetic representations of M. Necker, the
“ assembly of electors, impressed with simi-
“ lar feelings of justice and humanity, or-
“ dains that the day of this minister’s return
“ into France, whose presence was so de-
“ sirable and necessary, should be consider-
“ ed as a festival: the assembly therefore, in
“ the name of the inhabitants of this capital,
“ and sure of their approbation, declares,
“ that its enemies are pardoned, that it pro-
“ scribes every act of violence contrary to
“ the present decree, and that it will here-
“ after regard those as the only enemies of
“ the nation, who by any excess shall dis-
“ turb the public tranquillity.

“ Be it farther ordained that this resolu-
“ tion shall be read in every parish church,
“ be

“ be proclaimed in all the streets by sound of
 “ trumpet, and sent to all the municipalities
 “ of the kingdom; and that the applause it
 “ obtains shall be regarded as the criterion of
 “ good citizens.

“ Given at the Hôtel-de-Ville 30 July 1789.

“ MOREAU DE S. MERY, } Presidents.
 “ DE LA VIGNE, }

“ DUVERYER, }
 “ BERTHOLIO, } Secretaries.”
 “ GARNIER, }
 “ DESROCHE, }
 “ DELIESSE, }

I could wish for room to transmit the names of all those who participated in this memorable act. You shall never be forgotten by me, you my only benefactors, you who made me enjoy in a single moment the delights of an age; and I regret that I cannot render you a homage equal to my gratitude. How pure was my felicity on that day! Every instant of it is engraven on my memory, and I cannot yet recollect it without emotion. I secured the return of peace; and I used no other means than the language

of reason and virtue. This idea pervaded all the affections of my heart, and for a moment I conceived myself as placed between heaven and earth. How complete was my felicity when I returned to Versailles! The late sacrifice I had made, the dangers to which I had been exposed, those which still impended over me, were all forgotten. The acclamations of the people, which I again experienced, had now a superior charm; they seemed all at once to have assumed a different nature; they seemed, like that purer atmosphere which is to be found in the most elevated regions, to have something in them celestial and divine, and my heart and my mind dwelt upon them with transport. But alas! this sublime felicity, as I have already observed, was of short duration; it vanished like a dream, and with it my dearest hopes. So soon as the night of this memorable day every thing was changed. The leaders of the democracy were occupied with other thoughts; they wished to show neither lenity nor forgiveness; they stood in need of all the passions of the people, of its mistrust in particular; and they were unwilling, be the consequence as it might, that any important event

event should be ascribed to my intreaties and influence. They assembled therefore the districts, and they knew what arts to employ successfully to irritate them against a decree which had been adopted by their representatives, by the electors whom they had themselves nominated, by the general assembly of the Hôtel-de-Ville, and which had been ratified by the ardent wish of the nation. The National Assembly was my hope against this unfortunate opposition; but, alas, they gave it their approbation, and I saw the momentary edifice of my happiness completely overturned. And on what had this happiness depended? On a desire of retaining in the kingdom those persons who by their wealth and expensive mode of living supported and encouraged labour and industry; of seeing persecution and hatred give place to sentiments of confidence and magnanimity; of preventing that alienation the inevitable consequence of fears and alarms which we disdain to compose; of preserving the French nation from the tribunal of that dreadful inquisition, known by the name of *Committee of Inquiry*; in short, of making liberty more amiable, by giving it a less savage aspect, and by pointing

out its alliance with kindness, forbearance and lenity, the most beautiful ornaments of human nature and the virtues of which it has the greatest need. How many misfortunes might have been prevented, if the resolution entered into at the Hôtel-de-Ville had not been repealed, and the sacred impulse of the people despised! They have never been willing to make a trial of what great virtues might effect; the word patriotism, vague in its meaning and little understood, it was thought might supply their place: but it is not to the force of prevailing opinions, it is not especially to their exaggeration, that I give this appellation; it rather consists, in my opinion, in justice to all, in general philanthropy, and in those mutual courtesies, which ought equally to subsist between political powers and pretensions, as between personal and individual interests. It is in this manner general happiness is produced; it is in this manner the grand edifice of social order is placed on an immoveable basis.

One word more about myself, relative to the assembly of the Hôtel-de-Ville, and the demand I there made. If my request had been presumptuous, if the regret I still feel
have

have sprung from apprehension, I should at least have a right to complain of a flagrant instance of injustice.

He who consecrated the first moments of his return, and the first trial of his strength to the defending from unbridled resentment the very party who had driven him out of the kingdom, was not less the object of its persevering enmity. And by a singular fatality, this very person has offended beyond forgiveness another party, for having interested himself against this oppression, and gained over to his sentiments the representatives of the people, and, for the moment at least, the people themselves.

It was on this occasion that, in a private committee, the leaders of the prevailing party entered into a formal resolution *to destroy my popularity*: I make use of their own words. Noble and virtuous project, to which they contributed by every possible practice, to which they devoted themselves with the most unremitting steadfastness, and which by a variety of manœuvres, and by incessant libels, they brought, after much pains, to the most happy conclusion! But for whom was it happy? For the state, whose prosperity was

the incessant object of my labours? For France, to whom I was united by so many ties of affection? For the people, whom I had all my life courageously defended? For liberty, of which I laid the first foundations? For the king, who had never found a more faithful servant? For——But I will pursue my questions no farther; for in these days of faction to whom should I address them? At such a period a man is no longer any thing, unless indeed he may still serve as a holocaust to the rage of the wicked; but they have completed my sacrifice, and I cannot even be of this use to them. I address myself then to Europe and to posterity; it is them only whom I venture to interrogate; it is they alone who will one day be able to answer me.

I was thus however deserted by both parties, after yielding to an impulse of generosity, and after having performed an action, in which I was more than ever unmindful of all personal considerations to think of the interest of others and that of the public. I have now no other refuge than the remembrance of a pure and spotless conduct; but time will enhance the value of this consolation, since it carries us rapidly towards the shores

of that immense abyss, where an unknown but solemn tribunal presents itself on the opposite shore, of which conscience is here the archetype.

I go on with the plan I have marked out for myself; but while I select the leading measures of my administration and such as I ought not to omit, I greatly regret that I cannot stay to relate a number of minuter circumstances, which continually occur to my mind as so many daily services, so many virtuous and patriotic actions, and so many claims on the public gratitude. The reader will forgive this seeming egotism; it is not of my individual self, but of another self that I speak; for situated as I am at present, far from the society of men, at the foot of lofty mountains, listening to the monotonous noise of the surge, which presents no other idea than the equal march of time, having no prospect before me but a long solitude, a silent retreat which the shadows of eternal night begin already to overcast,—in this situation I am totally unconnected with that late minister hurried away by events, agitated by the passions of the world, and continually

struggling in the toils of injustice; I am totally unconnected with him but by the emotions of sensibility, as all the ties which fasten the heart to self-love, to a fondness for power, to a desire of glory, are broken. I can treat this minister as a stranger; I can now give my opinion of his conduct without being restricted to that code of lies and half-truths, which, that we may avoid the imputation of vanity, prescribes to us to speak of ourselves the reverse of what we think. These considerations of decorum, these worldly ornaments we may leave behind us, when, removed from the intercourse of men, we live by the laws of our own minds. I add one word in answer to a reproach which I have perhaps merited. It has been said that in many of my writings I have spoken too much of myself; but it has been almost always to vindicate myself from oppression that I have done it; for, I know not why, one has an unwillingness to trust one's defence to any but oneself.

I follow, as the reader perceives, the impulse of my thoughts, much more than the methodical arrangement of my subject. I return however from my digression. My first care,
on

on resuming my office at the end of July 1789, was to deserve the confidence of his majesty by recommending to him proper persons to fill the other departments of administration. Three of the most distinguished characters of the preceding ministry, M. de Montmorin, M. de la Luzerne, and M. de S. Priest had been already recalled, and the nation had applauded the measure. I pointed out four other persons, some of whom the king intrusted with particular offices and admitted the others into his council. Three of them were members of the national assembly, and in addition to the most eminent qualities were entitled to the praise of having proved themselves the popular and firm partisans of the principles of the constitution, in the sense at least in which those principles had been first explained and understood. The fourth, marshal de Beauvau, was particularly known to the king; he had been one of Monsieur's committee in the assembly of Notables, and his excellent judgment and generous character led him to join with the majority of the committee in favour of doubling the representatives of the Tiers-Etat. This circumstance, together with the fair reputation he had maintained,

tained, rendered his introduction to the cabinet pleasing to the nation; and when the king informed the assembly of the manner in which he had filled up his council, the information was received with shouts of applause.

The period is arrived when the predominant party in the national assembly, that which engrossed the favour of the people, has entertained suspicions and raised complaints against some of those very ministers whose political principles had formerly been extolled; but as this discontent chiefly broke out after I had quitted my office, I am unable to enter into a minute discussion of the subject. I can only observe in general, that we frequently conceive a change to have taken place in other men, when it is ourselves who have essentially changed. The ideas for example which were formed of the revolution have gradually undergone considerable alterations, or rather have received material additions; and the persons whose sentiments have not varied in a similar proportion, necessarily appear at some distance from the opinions of the day; the word constitution also being the term indiscriminately made use of to express both the original and the subsequent

quent ideas, the old and the new principles, many friends to their country find themselves singular and alone, merely because their minds have been less fluctuating: nor can we be sure that the men whose ideas at present are the most daring on the subject of liberty, will not hereafter be accused by their bolder countrymen of having changed their ideas and of being no longer favourable to the revolution. It is a great source of confusion to continue the same words when the ideas that were affixed to them have undergone material alteration.

Since my return to office in July 1789, my life has been a continued scene of anxiety and agitation. The scarcity of provisions was a considerable source of pain: but I shall treat this part of my administration last; it extends greatly beyond the period at which I am arrived in my review, and I ought to give the whole of the subject at once.

I have already spoken in a general manner of the finances, and the cares and exertions I employed to preserve them from shipwreck and disaster. The National Assembly showed no desire to hear of the subject, from a reluctance to encounter at so early a stage with arduous

arduous circumstances. They conceived also that they ought not to take up a business of such importance by halves ; their design was to seize upon the whole of it ; but they did not think it desirable to attempt this till, secure in the public opinion, they could employ without danger the most effectual means.

I asked not therefore their aid but at a moment of indispensable necessity, and I found it inadequate the first time I made use of it ; for having proposed to the assembly to authorise a loan of thirty millions at five per cent, they fixed the interest at four and half, and by this inconsiderate step the success of the measure was defeated. I discovered neither mortification nor displeasure, but I conducted myself on this as on many other occasions, having no other alternative than to act in the best manner I could with the given means, and to discard all personal considerations as things that were out of the question.

It was in consequence of this acquiescence that I took upon me to propose a patriotic subscription, and made myself responsible for a measure which the situation of affairs dictated and indeed forced me to adopt. The
assembly

assembly had injured credit by causing the first loan it had authorised to prove abortive ; at the same time it suffered the regular taxes to sink ; and yet it was thought just to make the minister answerable for the success of means intended to supply these deficiencies. I saw that my influence in the administration of the finances was drawing to a close ; it would therefore have been excusable if I had resigned their fate to the National Assembly at a moment, when, in the course of two administrations, I found myself for the first time obliged to speak to the people of sacrifices. The patriotic subscription, in the way I had planned it, was as little burthenfome as the nature of the business would admit ; it was still of all the duties of a minister that which gave me the most pain ; and it was from true conviction that I thus addressed myself to the National Assembly :

“ It is certainly a misfortune, and a misfortune of no common magnitude, to be obliged to recommend the expedient of a considerable contribution. I have recourse to it for the first time, and I feel all its bitterness. Having subjected myself to this mortification, I find little terror in all that is exterior to myself, the opinion, the judgment,

“ ment, and the condemnation of others ; my
“ whole soul is engaged in the anguish of its
“ own regret, and has no leisure to attend to
“ circumstances of inferior importance.”

These words expressed precisely what I felt : my life had for some time been a succession of sacrifices, and having once considered it in this view, I forgot myself, and thought only of the public ; and my feelings grew the more elevated in proportion as I deserted the usual tract.

The period when the National Assembly conceived that they might without inconvenience seize upon the entire administration of the finances, was after having created four hundred millions of paper money, a sum which they intended to increase in proportion as it might be found requisite. The struggle with difficulties was no longer what it had been ; the necessity of supplying large expences with an inadequate revenue was passed ; and the direction of affairs was all at once freed from the principal fetters that had bound it. It is a glorious time for administrators when by the unrestricted use of paper money they can not only supply all wants known
and

and unknown, but have a fund ready to start up on the very day and hour it shall be called for. They have only to procure a paper mill, a stamp, a plate, and a printing press, and the public treasury is secure, and they may themselves recline on the couch of indolence and repose.

Be this as it may, it must be allowed, if we leave out of the consideration the morality of two great measures of the National Assembly, the assumption of the property of the church, and the payment of the public debts in paper which can no otherwise be disposed of than in the purchase of this property, that the union of these two resources is the greatest, the most comprehensive and effectual operation of finance it is possible to conceive ; and I will further admit that a resource of an extraordinary sort was absolutely necessary to extricate the finances from the embarrassments in which they were plunged by the annihilation of the existing taxes, and the extreme slowness with which others were introduced in their room, together with the dangers inseparable from an unlimited system of innovation. It may also be remarked that the slowness of substitution has produced a spirit of tranquillity

lity in the provinces very favourable to the revolution. The people have confounded the abolition of the most burthenfome taxes, and the diminution of taxes in general, with the advantages of the new constitution. Perhaps too by the reaction of these ideas, when the new taxes will become payable, this constitution already applauded will render their burthen supportable. From all which it appears, that, leaving the morality out of the question, and this omission is a very eminent one, the conduct of the National Assembly has displayed a very skilful policy ; and though their system was neither conceived with deliberation nor prepared with art, but has rather been the fortuitous offspring of circumstances, the result probably is all that will remain to ascertain their merit or do honour to their memory.

The National Assembly would perhaps have ruined every thing at first, had it decreed to issue nineteen hundred millions of new bills, as had been proposed. Eight hundred only were issued ; and, if I contributed by my observations to that act of prudence and moderation, I thus rendered the state a parting service. There is no doubt but that the more

bills the assembly should have brought into circulation, the more would the price of the national domains and stock have been raised. But neither of these advantages would have been permanent, since they would have been the effect either of the fears of those who would have tendered this new currency in payment, or of the necessity in which they would have been to realize their money in this manner, and this only. That this truth may be apparent to the most ignorant or the most unthinking, let us extend the hypothesis, and imagine paper-money created, which should actually exceed, or be supposed to exceed, in value the real property on which it was founded. From that moment each billholder, certain or at least believing that a part of this paper could never be realized, would have dreaded lest he should have ultimately remained a proprietor of these inefficient bills; and hence there would have been such a general eagerness to realize such bills, that every species of actual property might have risen to twice or thrice their just value. There are always two points of comparison in bargains; the thing purchased, and the thing with which the purchaser pays; and the lower the value

K

of

of the latter is supposed to be, the higher will be the value of the former.

Perhaps it will be said that the price of bills can never be estimated above the course of exchange, at which they may immediately be converted into money. This observation is not true ; for such a course of exchange is applicable only to limited transactions, occasioned by the daily circulation of expence. There is no law against converting such bills into money; but it would be impossible to effect such a project, not only because the price of money would be sensibly raised, if heavy sums were thus collected, but because also the collector would expose himself to personal danger, by such a speculation. It would be truly a fiction therefore, to take the course of bill exchange on the place as the standard of the sum of the injury done to the persons who are obliged to receive these bills in payment, as creditors to the state, or from such individuals as are authorised thus to pay their debts.

From these observations we must conclude that, if we confine our views to the raising of the price of the national property, we must then issue paper money without restraint : for the more abundant it is the greater will the

rivalship be, between those who will endeavour to rid themselves of it by the acquisition of real property. But should any scruples be felt relative to the diminution of the value of the bills offered in payment, and should similar scruples exist against profiting by the advanced prices, which must be the general effect of resorting to this only means of realizing paper money, which the creditors of the state and the creditors of these creditors had been obliged to accept—I say that, if such scruples are just, paper money ought to be issued with prudence. In my Memoir to the assembly, my words were—“ The state ought “ not to constitute itself a stock-jobber, and “ profit by the public to enrich itself.” I believe this reflection to be perfectly equitable.

The resource arising from the sale of the national property must be prodigious; and I should have thought myself able, in other times, with a tenth part of the like succour, to have freed the finances from all difficulties, and have raised public credit to the highest degree.

I therefore think that the National Assembly has no right to assume so disdainful and triumphant a tone, relative to others, when

speaking of the state of the finances. But this reproach ought rather to be applied to its committee of finances. This committee seems to reproach the former administration, that it did not, like itself, put an end to all anticipations ; that it did not entirely liquidate arrears ; that it did not reimburse those civil officers who had purchased their places *, &c. &c. and for not having done all this the committee was kindly pleased to accuse it of stupor in its last report. But with the permission of this good committee, it was not from the resources which the new system of contribution afforded that the assembly found sufficient funds for all their reimbursements ; since at this moment full half of the revenues of the state are annihilated.

It is not therefore by means of reducing expences properly so called † that it has attained

* The more the government became corrupt, the greater was the price paid for such places ; it being the practice of the purchasers to repay themselves by every mode of exaction and corruption. T.

† By these I understand all such as concern the public service ; for the retrenchments that have taken place in consequence of certain payments being made by the departments

tained this end ; since such reduction, if we include expences that have been newly added, does not amount to more than fifteen millions.

Hence the real resources are the seizing on the wealth of the clergy, and the assignats which have been issued on the product of the sale.

Is it a proof of stupor, on the part of administration, that it did not undertake an operation like this ? There are certain proofs of industry which every man is not willing to give.

The committee of finances, ever intent to praise the administration of the Assembly, be it at whose expence it may, obliges me to repeat two assertions from its last Memoir.

The expences which are hereafter to be paid from taxes levied by each department, are there stated ; and, to relieve the picture, a comparison is drawn of the burthens to which the provinces were formerly subjected, which comparison concludes thus—" Expences levied by intendants, sub-delegates, &c. ; expences that were exempt from responsibilities which were formerly paid from the product of general contributions, cannot be considered as savings ; neither can the extinction of claims, which has arisen from payments made with assignats, be so considered.

“ lity, the amount of which cannot be calculated, because such levies were arbitrary.”

Thus the committee wilfully forgot a law of which I have before spoken ; a law known to all France, and enacted under my first administration ; a law by which the *taille*, the only tax susceptible of arbitrary increase, had been fixed immutably, and could not admit of being extended, unless by an edict properly inregistered ; so that from this period, when any extraordinary expences occurred in the provinces, they were paid out of the royal treasury. It would have become the committee of finances to have remembered an act so honourable to the reign of his majesty ; and it ought not to have stated that as a grievance which had so long been reformed ; neither ought it to have exaggerated this pretended abuse, by affirming that the amount of it could not be calculated. The sole objects for which new taxes could be incurred were parochial expences, repairs of public fountains, parsonage houses, &c. ; which were of small importance, and which will subsist under the new government. But these were not to take place, except at the request of the community itself ; and they were not authorised by the king.

king till he had received such approbation as was derived from the enquiries of provincial administrations. The road tax, which was the substitute of the *corvée*, was subject to the like regulation; and the epithets intendants, and sub-delegates, were in no sense applicable to the late state of public administration, in the provinces.

The second assertion I shall cite is the following from the same report, where it speaks of the lists made out for this road tax, and for the expence of collecting, &c.

“ These lists were odious, because they were
“ often made in a most unjust and arbitrary
“ manner ; and the public was forbidden to
“ inspect them. At present all is open, en-
“ quiry is entirely free, the people are the su-
“ preme judge, and responsibility is their pro-
“ tection. The national œconomy will hence-
“ forth be founded on the means by which
“ despotism formerly effected its ruin.”

This language is improper, because at least of the errors with which it abounds ; for the road tax had no relation to taxes in general ; it was the particular business of each community, which formed lists for itself, and regulated the business under the inspection of the provincial

administrations ; therefore these kind of operations were entirely open to the public.

The committee always refers to a more distant period than the last administration, from which to draw its comparisons. It ought rather to answer the end for which it was established, and not to leave unnoticed the law respecting the *taille*, and the establishment of provincial assemblies ; two great public benefits which had been confirmed by the king. It need not to have gone as far back as Pharamond, and the parallel between the past and the future would have still been more glaring and splendid.

The two errors with which I have here reproached the committee of finances, might easily have escaped its attention ; but there is some general reproof due to those extravagant pictures, which the reporters of the National Assembly, and its various orators, are in the habit of presenting, when they speak of former abuses. Who will deny that they were abundant ? The disorder was indeed great. Numerous laws stood in need of correction ; many necessary and useful regulations were wanting ; the idea of improvement every where presented itself ; and it was the knowledge

ledge and the conviction of these truths which, while they presented a noble career and immense labours to the views of the king, determined him to seek assistance from the representatives of the nation. But, while I thus express myself, I do not think the affirmations of the Assembly, concerning the former situation of the kingdom, less unreasonable, or less excessive. If we listen to their orators, we should believe they were called to civilize a savage country, to cultivate an unfruitful land, and to raise from obscurity a kingdom without existence, and a nation without renown. Yet, if I take a retrospect of this kingdom, which scarcely could be known by the description given of it, I perceive a succession of prosperity at which even imagination is astonished. I behold population annually increasing in a remarkable manner, so as lately to have amounted to more than twenty-six millions of souls. The soil I see covered almost every where with the riches of nature. I view ten thousand leagues of high road, crossing our territories in every direction, and connecting their various parts; a canal uniting the German Ocean to the Mediterranean; and various other canals advancing,

vancing, so as to form a communication between all our great rivers. I see France in possession of nearly half the money which is in circulation throughout Europe. I perceive her present at the division of the treasures which annually arrive from the two Indies; demanding a part equal to that of all other nations; and demanding it in exchange for the various products of her wealthy fields, in exchange for the precious fruits which she derives from the culture of her colonies, and as the reward of her industrious commerce, and the daily labour of her numerous manufacturers. I behold France superior to every other country, and rivalled only by England in sciences, arts and literature; but everywhere seizing to herself the authority which appertains to powers of mind and the gifts of genius. I perceive her attracting multitudes of foreigners, and inhabitants from every other country; who eagerly come to enjoy her fortunate climate, the security which the permanence of public order affords, and those blessings which the characteristic amenity of an amiable and feeling nation sheds over social life. In fine, the fortune and the fame of France, her prosperity and her triumphs, have
long

long excited at some moments the jealousy and at all times the attention of Europe.

Such was the flourishing country, such the celebrated kingdom, the new destiny of which is confided to the National Assembly. Hereafter we shall have to account for that degree of happiness which will be due to its cares; and for that increase of respect which we shall enjoy among other nations, in consequence of its laws.

We ought to hope the best, but I could have wished the Assembly to have acknowledged the riches and true state of the kingdom confided to it. Instead of incessantly occupying itself to depreciate its worth, I should have been glad had the assembly said—"France has
" gradually raised herself to the highest degree
" of prosperity; but she wanted a more equal
" and enlightened administration, a rampart
" impregnable to abuse of every kind, laws
" favourable to the people and which should
" grant as much liberty as is consistent with
" public order. We are called by our excellent
" king to be the guardians of all this good;
" let us bless him, and unite our labours, our
" cares and our vigilance, that we may in-
" crease the happiness and glory of our coun-
" try."

“try.” These simple sentiments would I believe have been greatly meritorious, and would have rendered the National Assembly more famous than those exaggerations on which it relies for immortal fame. We ought not to authorise men to take any thing from us; for their awkward hands do not always fasten on such things only as we do not want. But the Assembly is hurried away by its desire to exhibit itself, and to produce striking effects, which is its ruling passion. When such desires however are predominant in a political assembly, they must have great influence over most of its proceedings. Fearful of being outrun, it is in too much haste. Eager not to be thought an imitator, it rejects the best examples. Desirous of avoiding the accusation of inexperience, it makes theory the queen of the earth. Dreading the rivalry of the past, every thing is overturned and destroyed: alike fearful of being excelled by the future, innovations are multiplied to infinitude. All is violence, and it takes upon itself the task of time: thus it loses the assistance of this great benefactor of mankind, both in the physical and moral world.

The last report of the committee of finances,
from

from reflection to reflection, seems to have led me far. I must retreat a few paces, to say another word on this report, which may be of use. The committee profited only in part, by the recommendation which I so often gave, to separate the revenues and fixed expences from extraordinary expences and revenues; for they have stated two temporary objects among those resources which are to serve as a fund for fixed expences: that is—

Thirty-five millions (1,458,333 l.) in expectation, arising from the patriotic contributions.

Twenty millions (833,333 l.) *idem*, on the sale of snuff and salt at present on hand.

These two temporary resources ought rather to have been placed as a counterpoise to the extraordinaries of 1791: but it would then have been seen that a fixed revenue is necessary of an additional fifty-five millions (2,291,666 l.) as a balance to the fixed expences, and it could not be said there will no longer be any *deficit*. There would have been none on the first of May 1788, had this method been followed; for fifty-six millions (2,333,333 l.) raised by loan, and other resources,

resources, might have been included as a part of the revenue. As an excuse for the conduct of the committee, the example of England may be pleaded, where the total balance of the year is given, without accurately distinguishing between ordinary and extraordinary. But why should we imitate precisely those parts of the administration of our neighbours which are vitiated? The reason that the parliament of England has several times applied the sinking fund, or the product of a loan, to balance the fixed expences, is because it has often confounded the ordinary and extraordinary; by which means the nation has not been always able, with facility, to compare the actual relation which exists between the revenue and the fixed expences.

I offered France an additional means by which it might constantly observe the order the importance of which I am here noticing. This was the institution of the *Caisse de l'Extraordinaire*.

Neither do I know that it was proper to rank the new charitable donations among temporary expences; for the seizing on the domains of the clergy, the destruction of manor lordships, and even the abolition of the *u-randes*,

*randes**, will each and all of them deprive the poor of very considerable resources; therefore the public treasury must constantly supply an equivalent sum.

It is likewise to adorn the present at the expence of the past that the committee, in stating fifty-nine millions eight hundred thousand livres (2,491,666 l.) as the expenditure, the funds for which must be furnished by taxes peculiar to each department, adds that local expences formerly amounted at least to a sum as considerable. But this assertion is absolutely erroneous. The expences, which were provided for by additional contributions of the *taille*, amounted to about twenty-five millions, estimating the expence of the roads, like the committee, at twenty millions. The surplus therefore of the fifty-nine millions eight hundred thousand livres will be an augmentation: and in reality this surplus in the statement of the committee is relative to the new salaries of the judges, to the expences of administration in the provinces† (which
expences

* Officers elected by trades formed into bodies corporate; to preside at their assemblies, and act for the community. T.

† I know not whether it were prudent to provide for
the

expences were formerly much less considerable and were paid by the royal treasury), and in fine to other objects paid after the same manner; such as the expences of magistrates, the maintenance of prisoners, the erecting of public buildings, the salaries of the receivers of the taxes, the grants to hospitals, the aid given to paupers, deserted children, &c. No doubt the *arbitrary and not to be calculated expences*, levied and imposed by intendants and sub-delegates, might here happily be brought in, to supply so great a discordance of calculation. But I have already shewn that this insinuation did not apply to the last administration.

✓ I think the National Assembly is guilty of an error, in demanding from its committees a statement of the finances. This office should be committed to the person at the head of the public treasury; simply reserving to commissioners, appointed by the Assembly,

the salaries of the judges, and of provincial administrators, by individual taxation; for the people ought not to be continually reminded of the expence which is necessary to moral order; they are but too much disposed to think them unnecessary. What would be the effect were the same means to be employed to defray the expences of religion?

the

the revision and controul of such accounts. This revision ought to be made severely; and confidence might be placed in the desire which men have to detect the faults of others. But, when a body of deputies prepare and present statements and accounts, there is no longer any certain controul; because a minister held in restraint and submission as he must hereafter be, will scarcely be inclined to dispute with a committee more powerful than himself in the face of the assembly. The right of controul should always be reserved to the most potent and independent; for a man will not every day be found who, held like me by every kind of tie, by an account of his administration to which no explicit answer is given, and by his fortune left in the hands of the assembly, would rather cede to the emotions of candour than suffer himself to be guided by sentiments of personal policy.

The assembly, overwhelmed with business, and therefore obliged to pay no more than a rapid degree of attention to finance, is under the necessity of establishing a mode which will secure confidence. It ought irrevocably to fix the form of giving in accounts, and

L

never

never to admit of deviation : for a change of method will be sufficient to render the necessary connexion of the past with the present, and of the present with the future, unintelligible to most men. Thus the assembly praises or remains silent, according to the result of the accounts delivered in. All hands and feet applaud when it hears of its own miracles; and perhaps it is in mercy that it does not punish those whose statements are less agreeable.

The state of the finances would be in the completest and most stable order, if the fixed expences and the fixed revenue were balanced; for we need then only examine the immense amelioration of which the gradual extinction of a hundred and seventy-five millions of annuities gives us an assurance; we need then only expect the good which would result from the lowering the interest of money.

It will be said, we certainly ought to remember the real discharge of a specific sum in annuities, which will necessarily be paid off, in proportion as new assignats shall be issued to the creditors of the state. This has not escaped me; but, if I do not deceive myself,

self, the present state of the finances, such as it stands in the last report of the committee, cannot be improved by issuing new assignats, till such time as the presumed product of the sale of the domains will admit of calling in these assignats, to the amount of two thousand seven or eight hundred millions (112,500,000l.).

The following is my calculation (March 15th):

1. The public treasury has already been supplied with six hundred and fifty-six millions, expended or nearly so in such uses as are stated in the account.

2. I presume that three hundred millions more must be issued in the course of this year, for the necessary supplies and the payment of the land tax, the collecting of which is divided into two years, as well as for the general delay in collecting the revenue of seventy-six millions of temporary expences, which the *Caisse de l'Extraordinaire* is to discharge, and other payments which it must make*, as well as for contingencies.

3. Six

* The recovery of arrears confided to the *Caisse de l'Extraordinaire* has not been forgotten in this estimate.

3. Six hundred millions of reimbursements have been decreed; and the thirty millions of interest which will be cut off by these reimbursements have been subtracted, in advance, from the fixed expences.

4. I must further observe that, among the resources which the committee have placed as equivalent to fixed expences, we find sixty millions to be deducted from the revenues of the national domains. Thus, when twelve hundred millions of assignats, in addition to the three preceding articles, shall be issued, and when a capital equivalent to the debts of the state bearing five per cent. interest shall be repaid, annuities equal only to the sixty millions, already carried to account in the fixed revenues of the state, will be paid off. Now as no part of these sixty millions of revenues will remain to the state, if the total product of the sale of the national domains should amount to no more than the four articles above stated,

But neither must it be forgotten that the patriotic contribution for 1791, and the sale of salts and snuffs, during this year, have already been taken as resources into the account of the committee.

The

Millions of Livres.		Pounds Sterling.
The first of 656	} equal to	27,333,333.
The second of 300		12,500,000
The third of 600		25,000,000
The fourth of 1200		50,000,000

Total 2756 Total 114,833,333 l.

I was justified in saying that the present state of the finances cannot be improved by issuing new assignats; except as far as the presumed product of the sales will allow us to issue bills beyond the two thousand seven or eight hundred millions.

I do not think this discussion either useless or uninteresting: it will inspire no fears in the creditors of the state, who ought to confide in the relation that exists between the revenue and the fixed expence; but it will warn the national representatives that, in despite of the vast resources decreed at their omnipotent tribunal, the moment of necessary prudence is arrived.

It will perhaps be expected that, while I dwell on subjects of finance, I should speak my opinion on the new taxes. But they are decreed, and ought only to be viewed on the favourable side. I therefore only perceive that the new system of taxation will put an

end to the exactions inseparable from the absurd mode of collecting the *droits d'aides*, and to the former unjust inequality in the price of salt, and the dearness of this necessary article, which was the fatal result of this inequality; that circulation will be absolutely free; and in fine I perceive the happy abolition of all the privileges of man over man, and of province over province, and the good which must result from a more extensive equality in the division of the land tax.

There is another reflection which seems to me not to have been made, and which must serve as an excuse to the National Assembly, relative to their innovations in taxation, should their system fail of success. It is this. No nation ever established all the taxes and claims to which they find themselves subject at once. The necessary contributions and wants of each political society have been levied by degrees, and by degrees also that were unequal, because expenses have principally accrued at the conclusion of wars, and other extraordinary calamities. No general and consistent view in all its parts could therefore systematically direct individual taxes. Through the various kingdoms of Europe, the defects of these edifices have been every where remarked ;
raised

raised as they have been in succession, and agreeably to the exigencies of the master of the building. But great changes were become impossible, because no risk must be run between the daily receipt and expenditure, which is rendered difficult by the number of taxes and public offices even in times of tranquillity. It were therefore to be wished, for the general good, that a nation might find an opportunity of attempting so great a change; and this opportunity happened to a kingdom which, from a circumstance unexampled in history, had the power, if necessary, to forbear during a whole year to collect its revenues. This is precisely the situation of the National Assembly; in consequence of the sale of the domains of the clergy, by anticipating the product of those domains, and by the aid of assignats brought into circulation.

I ought however to observe that public order and general satisfaction are essentially necessary to the safe collecting the contributions which have been fixed. For a tax is much more felt when not concealed, like that of salt and of snuff, in the very price of the article: and it is likewise more burthensome when it is

not collected, as the latter is, in small portions and by voluntary consumption; for all taxes which imply seizure, in default of payment, require a greater ascendancy in the ruling power. Such seizures often repeated are attended with many inconveniences; and even become impracticable, should there be any tacit agreement, or should men be incited by the contagiousness of imitation, not to pay them. The same cannot be said of taxes on articles of consumption; since the daily use of them calls and guarantees the payment.

I do not perceive that any experiment has yet been made on the grand difficulty of land tax. Will the sum be fixed that shall be imposed upon each department? If so, on what basis will this distribution be founded?

Population cannot serve as a rule; because the number of inhabitants in each department is not in any uniform proportion to the neat produce of the lands. This number every where essentially depends on the extent of trade, on the number of manufactures, and on the manner in which the land is cultivated.

The circumference of a department would
be

be a still more uncertain mode of comparison for imposing the land tax.

Will the *vingtièmes* as formerly levied serve as a guide for each department? The inequality which subsists in this respect is perfectly well known. The revenues of landholders in some provinces have been exactly verified, in others this has not been done, and several are taxed very much to their own advantage.

Will the *vingtièmes* and the *taille* collectively be taken as the basis of calculation? In that case very considerable variations would in like manner be found in the levying of this tax.

Finally, will the total of taxation, of every species, to which the departments were formerly subject, be assumed as a rule? If so, old privileges would thus be preserved.

All these difficulties will be felt, and there will no doubt be a wish to avoid those endless discussions which will be occasioned, by such division, between each department concerning the sum to be levied. In all probability therefore, it will be found expedient to fix the proportion which each proprietor throughout the kingdom must pay according to his net revenue. But why, in this case, must the sum total of the tax become an article of law?

The

The inconveniences attached to the division, on which a numerical tax must be founded, appear most important if this division must be fixed by an assembly the authority of which depends on concord. Yet a difficulty of another kind cannot be avoided, in determining simply the proportion which each proprietor should pay agreeable to his revenue ; for such a regulation would suppress the interest which the persons taxed collectively would otherwise take to inspect the whole. That interest exists when the sum levied is determinate ; because the favours granted to one are distinctly seen to be disadvantageous to the rest. But in a tax proportionate to the revenue all is separate, among the contributors ; and no one loses or gains by the manner in which his neighbour acquits himself of the debt : or at least the interest which each ought to take can only be perceived from general relations. Administration must therefore watch over the rectitude of individuals ; but such multiplied attention must soon inevitably become feeble.

An experiment of these difficulties was made in collecting the *vingtièmes*. Yet they were endeavoured to be obviated in the *pays d'élection*,

*d'élection**, by naming directors, who were ordered to divide the tax according to uniform instructions. The imperfection of these operations related, at that time, to a tax the produce of which was only estimated at fifty-five millions (2,295,833*l.*); in the annual revenue therefore the effect of inevitable abuse was limited. The difficulty will become more serious when annexed to a tax of three hundred millions (12,500,000*l.*) including the *sols per livre*†.

The new administrators of provinces will be better informed than their predecessors were, and more animated by the spirit of patriotism. This no doubt will be said, nor do I contest its truth. But they will have to tax the persons by whom they are elected; and will not this be a great inducement to partiality? Should they favour any individual, how can they be severely just towards all the rest? Nor will it be sufficient that a perfect spirit of equity should exist in one district; it must

* Districts which previous to the revolution had the privilege of electing certain officers. T.

† In France it has been the custom to raise new taxes by adding one, two, or more *sols per livre* to the old. T.

be

be every where predominant, otherwise the persons taxed in one division, informed of the lenity with which the persons of the next are treated, will wish to obtain the same favour ; and the administrators themselves will require such uniform justice to authorise the severity of their superintendence.

Those who presume that all difficulties appertaining to the division of territorial taxation will be surmounted, when a general register of the whole kingdom shall exist, are deceived ; for, to render such a register useful, it would be necessary that the total of the tax should be divided among the departments in numerical sums ; and we have shewn that such a division would furnish an inexhaustible source of dispute. Beside, a register might serve as the guide of agreement among such as should know its accuracy, who should be enabled to judge of the principles on which it was formed, and who should perceive the application of the same principles to their respective property. But how might a kingdom like that of France be subject to such uniform register laws, with the consent of the whole nation ?

Hence

Hence there are inherent inconveniences in the levying of the land tax, which should be an inducement to prudence, in determining the mode of this new kind of taxation.

The conjectures formed on the net produce of the lands of France are founded on vague notions, which are liable to an infinite number of remarks. Twenty wealthy proprietors of the National Assembly, who should have been desirous of making known the actual proportion between their revenue and the *vingtièmes* to which they still are subject, in the different provinces where their estates might be situated, would have afforded more useful information than all the abstract enquiries which were entered into by the committee of taxes. It would at least have been proper to have requested information from the directors of districts, or departments, on the relation which is formed between the *vingtièmes*, in their cantons, and the net revenues of estates; and their information compared with ideas which might have been communicated by the directors of the land tax, would have led them into the road of truth, of which they were in search.

Let us here suppose that, according to received

ceived information, it should be estimated that the two *vingtièmes*, and the four sols per livre in addition to the first, the sum total of which would be a ninth, ought to have realized double the sum, had the people regularly paid; that is a hundred and ten millions (4,583,333l.) instead of fifty-five (2,291,666l.) This would have afforded a first principle, by the aid of which the product of any other part might have been found.

Thus for example it will appear that a sixth, the equivalent of a ninth and one half, should produce a hundred and sixty-five millions (2,708,333l.).

But to this sum should be added

1. Ten or twelve millions (416,666l. or 500,000l.) for the sixth of the revenues of the domains of the clergy, which formerly were not subject to the *vingtièmes*.

2. From thirty-five to forty millions (1,458,333l. to 1,666,666l.) for the sixth of the increase of the revenue of landholders, for the exemption from the *taille* and the tenth.

I do not endeavour, as is evident, to give exact estimates, but to hint at such as each person may make, in order to calculate the product of the new land tax.

In matters of business it is always greatly advantageous to reduce complicated questions into a small compass.

The moral considerations that enter into the estimate must ever be the most difficult, and can only be made from experience. It is not sufficient to calculate the net produce of lands; the endeavours that will be made to conceal this product must also be brought into the account; the degree of watchfulness and authority of the various administrators must be investigated; and the relation between the power of the people, the price of necessaries, the laws of exportation, and interior circulation must all enter into the statement. In fine, in a contrary sense, the happy effects of agriculture, the suppression of the gabel and the *droits d'aides*, and the exemption from an infinite number of the former shackles of commerce, must make a part of the consideration.

No person has yet published the elements of the estimates of the new taxes adopted by the National Assembly; no well-founded opinion therefore can be deduced from their proceedings.

An estimate of fluctuating taxes is no simple

ple process ; for it must consist of theory and fact. After much labour, an estimate has been formed of the actual value of rents : but to this should have been added conjectures on the reduction of these rents, when they become a rule for the levying of any considerable tax. The estimate of the right of enregistering letters and bills of exchange is likewise a very complicated speculation ; real knowledge and great judgment are necessary to give the least degree of certainty to such a calculation. I have been a witness to the most erroneous deductions of this kind, and I discover much dignity on the part of the assembly, and much familiarity on that of its committees, in the succinct explanations with which they have reciprocally been satisfied on such important subjects.

The same inattention was shewn when, without hesitation, the former tenth was supposed to be justly estimated at a hundred and thirty millions (5,416,666l). I had not left Paris when this estimate was so readily adopted. It does not appear to me to be founded on any good grounds, and I think it exaggerated.

In the estimate of new taxes, care will surely
be

be taken not to neglect the influence and the nature of those resources to which cities must have recourse, as substitutes to their *droits d'entrée**. There is always more or less of relation between every tax; and it seldom happens that the second does not injure the first, the third the second, and so of the rest.

Experience is the best master; yet my hopes will be excited and become great, the moment I perceive public tranquillity established, social order restored, and a spirit of unity once more make its appearance; for there is no impediment, not even any fault, over which the formidable confederacy of the knowledge and will of a great nation is not capable of triumphing.

I will dwell no longer on the finances: it was my duty to support them till the National Assembly took them under its protection. It became me to be the faithful shepherd, during the absence of the master. I have acquitted myself of this obligation; but all that I have done relates to the past, which I cannot recal.

Let us examine how I acted in that most

* Duties paid at the gates of cities and barrier towns. T.

dismal of all nights, when the few torches which enlightened it were carefully extinguished, from the most despicable of all parsimonious motives, that of ingratitude.

One of the parties into which France is at present divided will perhaps be surpris'd that I should rank my conduct, at the epocha of the gravest of all discussions, that of the *veto*, among the number of services rendered to the state. Passion must sit in judgment upon all things ; and prudence must not shew its face. Let the motives that guided my conduct once more be explained.

The absolute *veto* granted to the king, was supposed or represented to be an impediment to every salutary reform of which the nation was desirous ; or at least a political step towards making the establishment of public liberty, and the happiness of France, dependent on the will of the ministry. Thus considered, it may well be imagined how important the question must appear ; and the agitation in Paris, and throughout a great part of the kingdom, was extreme. It was therefore infinitely probable that, had the assembly been reduced to the necessity of deliberating whether the absolute *veto* of the king should be rejected or received,

received, guided by its own feelings or hurried away by public clamour, it would have decided that the royal sanction was not necessary to give validity to laws decreed by the representatives of the nation. But let us suppose a small majority on the contrary side; such a feeble superiority of votes would not have given permanency to a decree of this nature; and the general disposition would have been felt, in the most violent manner, on the first opportunity.

These general circumstances, as generally known, and the particular information which I collected, made me sensible of the necessity there was of a point of conciliation proper to calm this dangerous effervescence, without depriving the king of the means of affording such resistance to the decrees of the National Assembly, as the good of the state might require.

It is evident that this last purpose was entirely effected, by reserving to his majesty the power of refusing his sanction to the decrees of the National Assembly, notwithstanding the demands of a first legislature, and the perseverance of a second, though he were obliged to yield to the sense of the nation, in case a third

legislature adhered to the sentiment of the two preceding. Such constancy and perseverance of sentiment on the part of the deputies of the nation, can leave no doubt relative to public opinion. And how can it then be imagined that a prudent prince would oppose invincible resistance to a union of sentiments so general and so long supported ? If from singularity of character such should be his desire, it were to be wished, for the good of the state, that the constitution should not acknowledge his right.

However, as I carefully shewed in my report to the king on that subject, which report was communicated to the National Assembly and printed, there was this grand difference between an absolute *veto* and that of which I furnished the idea ; that the latter was of real service, whereas the former would have been reduced to a simple honorary prerogative. It never could be supposed that the king could perpetually impede a law enacted for the public good, and pertinaciously insisted upon by the representatives of the nation : and the dread of awakening irritation, by once refusing the royal sanction, and of exciting universal discontent, would constantly have deterred ministers

nisters from formally exerting the prerogative on any occasion. Great must have been their courage thus to expose their own safety ; and such courage would most frequently have been deficient in prudence.

The same cannot be said of the suspending *veto*, as proposed by me. This kind of opposition, contained within just limits, would calm first suspicions, prevent the imagination from running astray, and give the monarch all necessary time to obtain the support of the public. This is all which the chief of a kingdom can want, under such circumstances. He may be compared to a general in a camp ; too feeble to sustain an obstinate attack, but strong enough to take time to examine whether auxiliaries can or cannot be brought to his aid.

The king in the English constitution has a right to refuse his consent to bills passed by both houses of parliament, as long as he shall please. But it is generally acknowledged that, were he to exert his right on any important occasion, he would be obliged to dissolve the parliament. And, should a new parliament adopt the principles of the preceding one, the king would be under the absolute necessity of complying ; not constitutionally, but in order to prevent the

refusal of subsidies, or some other more serious disturbance. This right of rejecting bills is therefore in reality reduced to a kind of royal pomp. His opposition can only be suspensive and temporary ; and, for the very reason that its duration is not limited by the constitution, the monarch is necessarily more circumspect in the use of his prerogative. England cites but one example of its having been exerted.

No inconvenience can result from its being a moral impossibility that the king should reject bills presented by parliament ; because, parliament being composed of two houses, the deliberations of which are distinct and separate, the risk of an inconsiderate *veto*, on his part, is a danger which does not exist*. And one of these houses, that of the lords, watches in a particular manner over the indiscreet at-

* It is by an innovation introduced into our language that I apply the word *veto* to the refusal of the royal assent to a bill of parliament. M. de Calonne in his last work, without reflecting on the new acceptation which custom gives to certain terms, attributes our faults to the confusion which we have made of the legislative rights of the English monarch with the *veto* of the tribunes of Rome, or the gentlemen of Poland. This information is charitable ; but how can it be presumed that a whole nation should be in want of such aid ?

tempts

tempts which are made on the royal prerogative. But in the French constitution, where there is only one house of parliament, it would be very unfortunate for the state, if the royal opposition to all the decrees of the National Assembly, thus constituted, were rendered wholly ineffectual. The only mode of preventing such an inconvenience, was that of fixing the duration of his opposition ; that, being considered by the nation as temporary, government might exert it without exciting any dangerous commotion.

I was certain, long before this contest concerning the *veto*, that the establishment of two houses, especially two houses composed of elements so discordant, would never take place. And it was this foresight which induced me to be the more active in preserving to the king a right of opposition, circumscribed by reasonable limits ; and which might not be merely honorary, without the power of application.

These calculations of prudence have been the sport of accident ; but the expedients employed to render them so are a new proof in their favour. I will speak the truth ; silence would be cowardice. Those who exercise a power, sometimes secretly sometimes openly,

over the National Assembly, took umbrage at the effect produced on the public by the reasonable and guarded observations which the council of the king indulged themselves in, relative to some of the resolutions of the Assembly. They foresaw that, by the aid of these observations, government might without danger have recourse to that right of opposition which the constitution had so lately granted the king ; and as this did not accord with their absolute will, they felt how necessary it was to clothe the use of the suspensive *veto* in terror, in order to render it ineffectual. They regretted that such a right had been admitted ; and, were we desirous of searching into certain mysteries, this reflection would easily be brought to coincide with the project formed to oblige the king to fix his abode at Paris. It was immediately after his arrival at the Thuilleries that he was required to sanction, without reserve, all the resolutions of the tempestuous night of the 4th of August ; that they fixed the term of eight days to grant or refuse his sanction to all their decrees without distinction ; that they prescribed their laconic formulary ; and that they indirectly gave the ministers to understand how useless every kind of

of

of previous objection would be. By thus depriving the king of every means of aid from the public opinion, and by giving at the same time free course to popular effervescence, all opposition on his part would have been rendered dangerous: and then, far from regretting the imaginary right of an indefinite *veto*, far from reflecting on the too short duration of the right of opposition which was to extend to the calling of a third assembly, ambition would frequently have limited itself to a suspension of a fortnight, or of a month, a delay sufficient to suffer first emotions to cool, when certain decrees should have been presented for the royal sanction.

The National Assembly never certainly intended to act contrary to the prevailing opinion, since in that opinion consisted all its power. The king can at present less effectually struggle with popular emotion. But public opinion presents a different aspect according to the time given it for consideration, and according to the lights by which it is guided. Thus a suspensive *veto*, as far as the third assembly, satisfies every precaution which reason can advise, or the good of the state require.

I there-

I therefore again repeat, that with two houses of parliament, as in England, the indefinite *veto* would perhaps be the best ; for when the powers are intended to be dormant, that which has the most dazzling appearance is to be preserved. But, where there is but one house of parliament, the suspensive *veto*, as proposed by me and adopted by the assembly, is, in the opinion of many men of sense, one of the happiest thoughts in the whole constitution.

Were we to give imagination the reins, we certainly might suppose cases, or invent an hypothesis, in which, in despite of the obstinacy of three successive assemblies, and the guarantee of the national wish, the law which the monarch might be required to sanction might be contradictory to his opinion. But such suppositions are absolutely chimerical. Beside, it is sufficient that political laws include within themselves all which is probable, all which is morally possible. Peculiar occasions demand peculiar modes of action.

We ought by no means to forget that the question concerning the *veto* is not applicable to the constitutional laws, and to those which
establish

establish fixed relations between the different powers. The latter, determined and immutable in all countries, depend on the support afforded by general interest, and the force accompanying that interest: and as that force exists at present by general consent in the representatives of the nation, they have made it a principle that they alone can enact these sort of laws; and that they ought to demand no more than a simple acceptance of the form from the king. It cannot therefore be said that, from the necessity which the king on summoning a third assembly will be under to sanction a decree in contradiction to his opinion, there will be any legal mode, slow indeed but efficacious, to diminish the power of the monarch: for the degrees of this power must be determined by constitutional laws; and to infringe these, be it to the prejudice or advantage of the royal authority, a power similar to that which overturns or shakes all political edifices will be necessary; and not decrees of the nature of those which must be rendered valid by the sanction of the prince.

It was not in an urgent manner that I proposed that the king should authorise me to
com-

communicate to the National Assembly my report to the council on the question of the *veto*. Such a well-considered measure was not of the number of those which are to be carried by importunity. The king therefore coolly examined the various remarks which I submitted to his judgment; and, after having taken some days to reflect on them, he approved of my proceedings and plans. The mind of the king is exceedingly accurate; and whenever his easiness of temper is not strongly acted upon, whenever the modest diffidence he has of himself is not abused, I should always think it a token favourable to any opinion to which he should assent.

I continue to recapitulate those great occasions in which I have rendered some service to the state; for, being obliged to confine myself to certain limits, it is proper I should omit all less conspicuous facts. The 5th of October will long be remembered; when, by a singular fatality, without previous advice, or previous commotion, information suddenly arrived that the regular troops, the national guard, and in fine an immense multitude,
were

were preparing to come from Paris to Versailles. The king was gone to hunt; and on his return the ministers informed him of all they had heard. The resolution which it was necessary his majesty should take, was the greatest question that had ever been agitated in any council. The safety of the monarch and the peace of France were closely connected with it, and perhaps the continuance of the monarchy. The king was to determine whether he would leave Versailles. There were certainly very plausible reasons for the affirmative, and such as must, under circumstances so alarming, make a great impression on the mind of the king, and on several of his ministers.

Nor am I surprised that, since the king has resided at Paris, forgetting the misfortunes which his resolution prevented, and picturing to themselves a vague idea of the liberty he would have enjoyed elsewhere, some should have regretted this resolution. Since therefore many people, no matter from what motives, have reproached me for my opinion, and the advice I gave on this grand occasion, it is my duty here to state my motives.

I immediately perceived that probably the
king,

king, accompanied by the royal family, could not have left Versailles without encountering great obstacles. I have no doubt but they would have been surmounted by his guards. But could they have been so without effusion of blood, and without exciting tumults? Would not this first misfortune have been as a signal for many succeeding disasters?

The king was destitute of money; and, as the royal treasury was at Paris, on the first news of his flight, all supplies for the court would have been refused.

His majesty's determination might likewise have been immediately misinterpreted. It might have been attributed to a design long premeditated. It might have been rumoured that the people, and the soldiers from Paris, had come to Versailles to oppose the execution of this very plan. And from experience we know to what a degree the opinion of the kingdom is swayed by that multitude of pamphlets which, under the guidance of the same spirit, and dispersed with unequalled activity, may be said at present to cover the face of France.

In towns at some distance from Versailles, which were the only places he would have
been

been able to have retired to, the king would have met with the same temper and distrust as prevailed at Paris ; and this distrust would have been augmented by the circumstance of his being accompanied by the warmest adherents of a contrary party.

The king would also have found the minds of men agitated by the uneasiness which the scarcity of provisions occasioned ; and Paris, unprovided, existing on daily succour brought from within and without the kingdom, would indubitably have suffered all the horrors of famine, if, at such a moment, the departure of the king, and the troubles which would have followed, had deprived those agents of confidence whose active interposition was scarcely sufficient to supply our urgent wants.

In homage to the virtue of his majesty, it becomes me to say that this consideration produced a great effect on his mind. Paris had just treated him with violence ; yet the welfare of Paris partly induced him to remain near that city, and to resist those personal motives which might have tempted him to retire.

His majesty was likewise exceedingly moved, by reflecting on the violence into
7 which

which such a multitude of people, mingled with so many savages, might have been hurried, when, on their arrival at Versailles, they should not have found the king. All that part of the National Assembly whose political principles had rendered them suspected would have been accused of his flight: and the mind shudders at imagining the horrors to which a moment so tumultuous might have given birth. The right of forming conjectures so dreadful has unfortunately been acquired, by the recollection of the abominable excesses of the night of the 5th of October, and the crimes committed in the midst of regular troops, in the bosom of apparent order, and in the sacred abode of the august head of the nation. Let us at present banish these shocking recollections. Oh, that they could for ever be effaced from the memory of man!

In fine, at the close of events so unfortunate, of which the departure of the king would have been the cause or the pretext, after those guilty excesses which would have been justified by combining them with some grand revolution, and as the result of the first bold step would have been a succession
of

of still bolder, it cannot be affirmed that new measures for the government of the kingdom would not have been proposed; and that the authority of the king and the support of the monarchy would not by degrees have been in peril. There are so many passions ready to profit by great incidents, and ardent to seize on them, that, in a state of extreme confusion, the final consequences must ever remain unknown.

It was this image of crowding dangers which rapidly presented itself to my mind, in the short space of time during which the part it became the king to take was debated. And if his prudent determination actually prevented the shedding of rivers of blood; if it preserved the kingdom from the horrors of a civil war, the monarchy from tottering, and Paris from famine; if it were the safeguard of a part of the National Assembly; and if, as I believe, it protected the state from the greatest of misfortunes; those who, according to the measure of their influence, had the happiness to contribute to it, far from meriting reproach, established real claims on the gratitude of the nation.

The same spirit of peace and public be-
N nevolence

nevolence which fixed the resolution of his majesty, made him anxious concerning the commotions which his arrival at Paris might occasion in the provinces. These he was active to prevent ; and he succeeded by a proclamation in which I endeavoured to express the sentiments of kindness and affection by which his majesty was animated ; and which, circumstanced as he was, so perfectly accorded with his prudence.

Those who for a moment regretted that the king did not profit by the constraint that was exercised towards him, to raise a part of the nation in his favour, were soon convinced that their calculations and predictions were as inconsiderate on that occasion as on many others. The interest taken in his situation was confounded with those general sentiments which his virtue inspired. The provinces made no remonstrance ; and the attention of the public was soon entirely fixed on the political views which were connected with the residence of his majesty in the metropolis.

This new residence, and the whole of the king's situation, increased the difficulties of government and rendered its task more delicate.

cate. Considerations, formerly unheard of, daily influenced its proceedings. The truth must be spoken: the safety of the king became for a time the sole interest of the ministry. He was in the midst of a people by whom he was beloved, but over whom dangerous men had acquired an absolute dominion. He was there at a moment when the scarcity of provisions, and the recollection of past alarms, might each instant become the subject and the ready means of insurrection. Caution therefore was necessary; and, for the first time, the spontaneous sentiments of the king, and the apprehension of an unknown and infinite danger, made his implicit conformity to all the decrees of the National Assembly appear to be a prudent measure.

I well remember the constraint under which my proud reason acted, by the captivity in which it was held: and I recollect, with some pleasure, having seized an opportunity in which a responsibility for events, a responsibility so strangely imposed upon administration, brought on a cause personal to themselves, and permitted them to address the nation without risking any thing but their own safety and character.

The discourse I pronounced, as may perhaps still be remembered, possessed all that dignity which appertains to freemen ; and it was in no manner tainted by the delicacy of the moment, and the critical situation of the ministry.

I also occasionally made such remarks, to the National Assembly, as its operations of finance and the state of affairs seemed to require from me ; and, notwithstanding the dislike which these remarks incurred, I am too honest not to own that more would have been made, on other subjects, had my advice prevailed in the council. But a system of general and unrestrained concession, a system that was right when the king first repaired to Paris, was afterward continued—from habit. I often opposed it ; but I shall only observe that, after having failed in various attempts to induce the king to fix the attention of the National Assembly on the decree relative to names and titles, I obtained leave from his majesty to publish, under his authority, my report on that important question.

From various views and for the general interest, I am led to believe that it would have been right to have subjected such of the

decrees as, in the judgment of his majesty and of his council, appeared to contain remarkable inconveniences, to new objections; and even formally to have rejected them, in the express terms of the suspensive *veto*. This plan I would have pursued in its full extent, and without any other circumspection than what might have arisen from any extraordinary event. Thus would my character have led me to have acted, and thus have I always acted in such public functions as I have been called to exercise. Never did I feel myself overawed in the discharge of such duties; and the National Assembly itself, august as it is, and notwithstanding its resentment, has never seen me treating but as its equal, when, in the name of his majesty, I have had to support reason, justice, and the laws of humanity. In the same characteristic spirit no one has more ardently defended or aided public freedom, and the constitution by which it was to be secured, than myself. An undeniable proof of this was seen in the memorable epocha of the 4th of February 1791; and the essential part I took in the conduct of the king ought of itself to have preserved

me from that severe indifference of which I now complain.

Never was conduct more conformable to the national wish ; and it has been celebrated in a thousand different modes through every part of the kingdom. The discourse of his majesty, among an infinite number of other marks of respect, was engraved in letters of gold on a plate of brass, and hung up in the Hôtel-de-Ville. Those who read it never fail to bless the sentiments and language of his majesty ; and tears of affection frequently flow from their eyes. Were they disposed to be just, impressions so pleasing might sometimes induce them to think of me. But to me alone is reserved the obligation and the labour of defending myself, against those who have hated me for this very discourse ; and this is the part which ingratitude has acted towards me on various occasions.

Perhaps it will be said that in every resolution, every step and every discourse of the monarch, he alone ought to be considered, he alone should be perceived, and that his ministers have no claims. I grant it most willingly.

lingly. Let but those sentiments of which it is wished to deprive me be added to the share of his majesty, and I will never complain. But I suspect that, in such deductions, œconomy finds nothing superfluous to bestow.

Nevertheless it would be a singular system which should attribute all the good to the king, and all the ill to his ministers. They would be the only persons who never could enjoy an alternate succession of censure and praise, reproach and gratitude. Thus the law of responsibility would be a law of vengeance, and never of love. On such conditions a National Assembly would assuredly be a severe task-master. Or does it conceive so high an idea of money as to imagine that the ambition of ministers should solely be confined to their salaries? Can it even think that, in virtue of these annual, quarterly or monthly payments, they may very legitimately be censured, and treated imperiously at pleasure? But in this fordid view of the subject, there still would be a distinction to make in favour of those who act without wages. What would the assembly say if, because of seven or eight millions which the nation pays them, the nation should imagine itself under no ties

of gratitude? The assembly rigidly requires its quota on the first of the month ; yet it is pleased like others to accept letters of compliment and congratulation into the bargain ; and that it might receive this surplus without delay, it has frequently sacrificed the first hour of its sittings. It ought therefore to act toward others as it wishes others should act towards it. This is the first law of equity.

I give free vent to my thoughts ; and returning to the king I shall say that the true friends of his person have always testified friendship towards me. Having observed me from my first ministry, and read the works that I composed when out of office, having studied also my conduct since my return to the administration, they have doubtless remarked that no man was ever more industrious to display the qualities and virtues of the monarch. They have seen me do this without flattery, but with that circumspection and decorum which inspire confidence, and the secret of which is known only to truth. When the king has confided to me the office of expressing his sentiments and opinions, my greatest care has been to make him loved, blessed and known. I have kept this thought
constantly

constantly in view, and, recollecting two banishments and some other accidents, the conduct I held is one of my greatest consolations. It became the most imperious of my duties, when amid the general commotion, the result of which is often beyond the reach of calculation, I considered the attachment of the nation to the person of the king as a point from which to rally, as a retaining power, and which under all imaginable errors might alone serve as the protection of the monarchy. How great an object for the meditation of princes ! How encouraging for them to be virtuous ! The storm increases, the waves swell, alarm is gone forth ; and their character like the rainbow recals hope, and promises a serener sky !

Never did the king display so many virtues, never did he act more agreeably to his own character, than during the sitting of the 4th of February ; and yet his motives were greater than his acts. By one last effort he was desirous of restoring peace to his kingdom ; and, to effect this, he thought it necessary to fix the public opinion relative to his political sentiments. He beheld a dangerous diffidence predominate ; a diffidence which retarded the labours

labours of the National Assembly, which kept Paris in an alarming fermentation, and which manifested itself in the provinces by insurrections and acts of violence. It was universally affirmed that the calm would be restored, would but the king be explicit ; would he but freely open his heart, and inspire confidence by the authority of his own example.

Every word he addressed to the assembly was in this spirit. He explained himself in the most unequivocal terms on the subject dearest to the nation.

“ I will therefore defend and maintain that
“ constitutional freedom, the principles of
“ which the general wish, according with
“ my own, has rendered sacred. I will do
“ more : in concert with the queen, who
“ partakes my sentiments, I will early prepare
“ the heart of my son to pursue that new or-
“ der of affairs which circumstances have pro-
“ duced. I will habituate him from his
“ childhood to rejoice at the happiness of
“ France ; and ever to acknowledge, in de-
“ spite of the language of parasites, that a wise
“ constitution will preserve him from the
“ dangers of inexperience ; and that true li-
“ berty adds increasing value to the sentiments
“ of

“ of love and fidelity, of which the nation,
“ during a succession of ages, has given its
“ kings such affecting proofs.”

He expressed in the most feeling manner the grief with which he was penetrated, at hearing the disorders which increased so fast in the provinces.

“ Join with me to impede such excesses,
“ and let us, by every effort, prevent those
“ criminal violences degrading to the age in
“ which the happiness of the nation takes its
“ date. You who have so many means of ob-
“ taining the public confidence, do you teach
“ the people their true interests, from which
“ they stray; a people so dear to me, by
“ whom they tell me I am beloved, when
“ they wish to afford me consolation amid
“ my griefs. Oh! were it known how
“ wretched I am, when I hear the unjust at-
“ tempts made on the fortunes, or acts of out-
“ rage on the persons of my subjects, perhaps
“ this bitterness of affliction would not be
“ heaped upon me.”

He shewed himself attentive to the indemnities due to those who had been subjected to great sacrifices, and recalled the assembly to the recollection of a subject so worthy of its attention.

“ Give

“ Give an example of that spirit of justice
“ which is the protector of property ; and of
“ that claim held in respect by all nations,
“ which is not the work of chance, which
“ derives not its privileges from opinion, but
“ which is ultimately connected with the
“ most essential ties of public order, and the
“ first conditions of social harmony.”

He despaired however of seeing every wrong redressed as he could have wished ; and especially those which seemed to be inherent in the new order of affairs ; and, with the most affecting self-application, he thus spoke to those who support such injuries :

“ I also should have losses to enumerate,
“ were I, amid the great interests of the state,
“ to descend to personal calculation ; but I
“ am fully compensated by the increase of national happiness ; and I say this from the
“ bottom of my heart.”

In fine, he employed the most ardent language, in endeavouring to calm the public mind and to allay animosity. He then fixed his eyes on those who had most need of efforts to forget the past ; and thus feelingly spoke :

“ Let those who still fly the spirit of concord, now so necessary, sacrifice to me the
“ memory of things by which they are afflicted ;
“ ed ;

“ ed ; and I will repay them with my gratitude and my affection.”

Oh ! wherefore was it that so much reason and so much goodness, on the part of the monarch, were so little successful ? How different an effect would a word from his mouth have produced, in the days of his prosperity !

I often remark, with grief, the different influences of our prevailing sentiments ; and fixing my attention particularly on political passions, I have sometimes doubted of the dignity of their origin, when I discover how obstinately they refuse to combine themselves with the feelings of sensibility. They introduce, it is true, other manners, and other principles ; but often, in their course, they bear away the good fruit with the bad ; and where they have passed we imagine we behold a land which burning lava has destroyed, and which requires a new course of culture.

Let us return to reasoning, the only thing we love in these times of apathy, though the emotions of the mind are perhaps only reason nearer perfection, a result drawn from nature, that great master in all things, that institutor who has no equal, and who bestowing on us the gift of feeling, has in that form bestowed the

the most simple, the first, and most learned of all combinations.

A party rose to oppose the discourse of the king on the 4th of February, and his professions of adherence to the principles of the constitution. And what were those principles? The indissoluble establishment of a National Assembly, the members of which, without distinction of rank, should be elected by the nation; an assembly, which, under the sanction of the king, a sanction absolutely free but upon the supposition of the uniform demand of three legislatures, would have a right to impose taxes, authorise loans, regulate public expences, and exercise without reserve all the functions which appertain to a legislative body. In fine, liberty the most unlimited, protected by the laws with every precaution that the preservation of a good so inestimable renders necessary, formed one of the essential conditions of this same constitution. There was nothing in these principles which might not, which ought not to augment the public felicity, the prosperity of the state, national respect, and the real strength of the empire.

These principles contained nothing which could affect the individual happiness of the mo-

narch ; nor any thing derogatory to his glory. They had in a great part been proposed by himself, at the conclusion of council held on the 27th of December, 1788, and in the discourse delivered by his permission at the opening of the States General. The union of the different orders, though posterior to these dates, had been provoked by the king ; and I have shewn that the suspensive *veto*, another remarkable innovation in the order of the constitutional laws, was preferable, both for the king and the public good, to any opposition of an indefinite term.

A grand and important public affair was still to be regulated. It was the corner stone, as it were ; and the king, in his discourse of the 4th of February, brought it publicly before the nation.

“ I cannot have any doubt”—these were his majesty’s words—“ I cannot have any
“ doubt but that, in finishing your work, you
“ will seriously employ yourselves, with prudence and with candour, to render the executive power permanent. It is a condition
“ without which no durable order can exist
“ within, nor any respect without the kingdom. You can have no reasonable doubts
“ remaining.

“ remaining. It is therefore your duty, as ci-
“ tizens and as faithful representatives of the
“ nation, to secure, for the good of the state
“ and public freedom, that stability which can
“ only be derived from an active and tutelary
“ authority. You will surely remember that,
“ without such an authority, every part of
“ your constitutional system will remain dis-
“ jointed and incongruous ; and while em-
“ ployed on the liberty you love, and which I
“ love also, you will not forget that disorder
“ in administration introduces a confusion of
“ rights, and often degenerates, by acts of
“ blind outrage, into the most dangerous and
“ alarming despotism.”

This executive power, recommended by the monarch as a necessary condition of a wise and benevolent constitution, had it been established in a proper manner, would have been sufficient to impart a regular momentum to every branch of the legislation. Experience would have shewn the advantages of the various individual regulations adopted by the National Assembly ; as the king himself observed—“ Time will reform whatever shall
“ remain defective, in that collection of laws
“ which have been the work of this assembly.”

Without

Without imprudence therefore, and without forgetting the general good, the king voluntarily adhered to the principles of the constitution, such as they were announced on the 4th of February. And the more he was persuaded that the completion of these principles depended on the establishment of an executive power, the more was it his duty to deprive the National Assembly of all doubt, concerning the principles he had established as his guide, and the sentiments by which he was animated. The declaration of his Majesty on the 4th of February, thus considered, was equally politic and generous. I felt how necessary it was that the king should say with truth—"From this time forth, no suspicion ought to harbour in your breasts."

The nation must judge whether such confidence in the king as should establish an executive power, and enable him to preserve obedience to the laws and maintain public order, were a reasonable confidence; and whether it has been granted. The nation must judge whether the views of the monarch, after his adherence to the principles of the constitution, were faithfully fulfilled.

O

I have

I have now to examine some other objections; especially those which the chiefs of one party proclaim in foreign countries, where they often gain credit.

The reproach most frequently repeated relates to the affected indifference which I have shewn for means of corruption : means, say they, practised in all countries with political assemblies ; and, pursuing this idea, the persons who treat me best ridicule my moral principles. According to them, by these principles and by this false delicacy, I have occasioned the loss of all ; and the greatest of Machiavels would better have served the king and the state.

I do not conceal this objection ; but I think it among the singularities of the present age that I am obliged to answer it ; that I am obliged to apologize for not having willingly purchased votes, suborned consciences, and corrupted men to give false opinions ; ideas which at another period would have been rejected as despicable. Am I to sustain reproach like this ? Is it to this age, is it to me that such dishonour belongs ? I believe it would not be difficult to defend myself, by such arguments and arms as the Machiavel they regret

gret would have afforded. But, before I employ them, before I can reconcile it to my feelings, before I can act thus without blushing, I must observe that, having early testified to the king my personal repugnance to means of corruption, I fulfilled, by this avowal, by this open profession of my sentiments, every obligation towards the monarch : for, from that moment, he might have called in another minister, and in this respect have followed the example of all princes, when those of whom they have made choice, whether from habits of mind or from principle, are found unsuitable to the existing circumstances: and thus the king conducted himself on the 11th of July.

I had explained myself to his majesty, in the most clear and positive manner, on the advantages and disadvantages of my character; and at a conference which was held in the king's cabinet, about the time of the convocation of the States General, at which the principal ministers were present, I remember I was led by the ardour of discussion to say in the presence of his majesty, that so long as a prudent mind, a worthy character, and a dignified heart might influence the public opinion, I perhaps should be as able to serve the state as any man; but should the course of events require a Mazarine, or a Riche-

lieu (those were my very words), from that moment I should be unfit to be at the head of public affairs. In effect, men have each their nature ; and the more strongly this nature is appropriate to certain circumstances, the less is it indistinctly applicable to all. There is but one manner of acting in great affairs ; for as for all those superficial qualities, of which a man of genius obtains as many as he pleases, they only compose an assortment of manners, proper to fill up the trifling hours of familiar society, or adapted to the common circumstances of life. Place me amid men susceptible of reason and feeling, and I think I can make some impression upon them ; and perhaps should deserve to be chosen as one of their guides. But, if it be necessary to deceive, to corrupt, to enslave, and to overawe them with rods of iron, I am a man unfit for such a ministry. A Mazarine, a Richelieu, must then be sought for.

Having by the avowal of my sentiments proved myself to be irreproachable, I will examine in a more political view, whether the system of corruption, which I am censured for having rejected or not seen the necessity of, be worthy of regret.

And first it is forgotten, that in the first ar-

dour of passion, and when the most splendid hopes present themselves, it is not easy to turn aside the chiefs of a National Assembly. More difficulties still will be encountered, when fame presents to them all the delights of novelty. It is also forgotten that such temptations tendered in money, must soon have been perceived ; and the government, and especially the first minister, must have lost the esteem and confidence of the nation, sentiments that had for so long a time appeared the substitute and produced all the effects of force. Beside, of what avail would the gaining of some members have been ? Every man was on the watch, and the mercenary would soon have been known, soon have been rendered suspicious, and soon have become a burthen to his paymaster. The corrupter and the corrupted, after having quarrelled perhaps concerning the price of their mutual disgrace, must at last have broken their engagement ; happy, after having parted, could they but forget the bargain.

The example of England is often cited, where it is said corruption is constantly employed. But first let me observe that parliamentary votes are not there bought with money. The heavy expences to which the En-

glish subject themselves to carry their elections, manifestly prove that they do not aim at pecuniary retribution, in obtaining these places. Were the public treasury to indemnify them for their expences, it would become a great burthen to the state. The minister gains them therefore sometimes by actually bestowing, and often by leading them to hope for, useful and honourable offices. But at the commencement of the States General, when there were important offices to bestow, or brilliant titles to grant, these kind of favours were such as but one class of men could accept; and that class, infinitely circumscribed, was previously attached by various ties to the royal cause. Beside, if it be true that men are held rather by hope than by gratitude, perhaps the greatest possible effect would be produced from useless offices by neither granting nor promising them to any person.

Law offices, being most of them either negotiable or transmittable, afforded no striking mode of recompense; and offices of finance required capitals so great, that for a long time none but the most opulent could pretend to them.

An idea was conceived of sending a member of the commons, a man of worthy talents, on

a particular mission to Corsica. This arrangement was made while I was detained at home by illness. I testified my regret to the ministry, and proposed the same sentiments in his majesty's presence, on the first day of my return to the council. The event proved that I had judged rightly; for the National Assembly, as soon as it was informed of the appointment, forbade all its members to accept any place in the gift of the king. I really know not in what manner, or at what period, the most remarkable men among the commons could effectually have been gained.

It may be more practicable toward the close of an assembly, because there is then not time enough perhaps for the assembly to inspect and discover the proceedings of those of its members who shall have changed sides; but I doubt whether such a scheme would be safe, if the Assembly should have two months to sit. Let it be added that, should government appear to confide in two or three particular members, and expect services from them, the others, being offended, would have an additional spur to endeavour to signalize themselves on the opposite party.

It has been seen, and is still visible, that

the National Assembly, which appears to be the sole legislative power, is itself subjected to popular authority. It owns not any such dominion; but it is secretly conscious and always respectful of it. A doubtful advantage would therefore only have been gained, had it even been possible to have obtained a majority, in the National Assembly, by corruption. Such a majority would only have been sufficient to carry inferior questions; for those of an important nature depend on another power: and the National Assembly, convinced of this, and knowing how necessary it is that they should be respected and obeyed, carefully consult that fluctuating and formidable power whose voice thunders louder than their own; a power which perhaps they themselves raised, but which soon thought proper to act imperiously in its own behalf.

Wherever legislation is confided to a representative body, public opinion actuates this body more or less; and government cannot by any means induce it to depart from a certain degree of circumspection. England affords a proof of this truth. The minister not only has the distribution of numerous places, but is openly tolerated in employing
this

this mode of gaining a party in his favour in parliament. Yet his ascendancy never could extend itself beyond questions of administration. Whatever affected the constitution, whatever infringed on the sanctuary of liberty, was incapable of every species of influence. It may be said that the limits of corruption have been described and traced, and that all attempts to extend those limits are vain.

If such in England be the confines of ministerial power over the house of commons, it may well be conceived that, at present, the same kind of influence must be much less in France. All is patriotic ardour at the beginning of a revolution ; all is love of, all is enthusiasm for freedom, while men continue to recollect ages of slavery. It is the moment of the birth of thought and sensibility, and no boundaries having been yet assigned them by the authority of experience, each in his delirium runs into extremes without any guide.

How, in times of such emotion, would it have been possible to fix the minds of men so as to direct and restrain the first expansion of such various pretensions? Those who should have sold themselves to government
at

at such a moment, would have shewn the narrowness of their judgment, and those who were worth being purchased would have disdained to set themselves on sale,

Nor should it be forgotten that, at a period so remarkable, one of the greatest known to history, the members who by their eloquence have most ascendancy in the National Assembly, are watched by such numerous followers, that nothing could in their opinion compensate for the triumph for which they hope, and which they have occasionally enjoyed. This glory beside is of a particular nature; it consists not in distant splendor, of which imagination forms a picture to itself; its concentrated rays brought into a small compass beam with effective brilliancy; and glory like this, clad in present honour and present applause, elevates the soul superior to the calculations of avarice and the common wishes of ambition.

I have observed that corruption in England, powerless with respect to constitutional principles, could influence ministerial questions. But in France, at a time when the ideas of men have undergone the most entire revolution, ministerial questions are confounded with every other question, or at least the line of demarcation

demarcation cannot be generally perceived. The suspicious and mistrustful disposition, which alone predominates at such a moment, must be allayed; that those objects may be plainly seen over which the influence of government is not only reasonable but often necessary. Till then, the practice of England cannot be applied to France. Such practice is tolerated there, because experience has taught the relations of things, because the principles of the constitution are universally known, and the time is long passed that the people were under any necessity to dispute on the rudiments of our learned theories. The English have not reduced the rights of men to sentences; but the simplest of their citizens is acquainted with the laws of his country, and to them is indebted for his safety, his happiness and his freedom. Therefore, without inspiring fears of the minister, who is never without a check, and under the knowledge and toleration of the nation, government strengthens its powers by distributing pensions and places which are left at its disposal. But, in France, we are in the first effervescence of freedom, and are fearless of excess. This ought not to excite our
astonish-

astonishment: we do not water the carriage wheels at the beginning of a journey.

A truth however results from all these reflections; which is, that those discover their own barrenness of mind, who, occupied by the ordinary affairs of life, and without having attended to the gradual development of an unparalleled revolution, without having studied the innumerable obstacles with which administration had to struggle, think they can shew from one single idea, and that idea the simplest of all, how every thing originated, and how every thing might have been remedied. How can they imagine that, had the removal of all difficulties depended on a single thought, that thought would have occurred to none but themselves? Yet do many reasonable people, chinking their guineas, tranquilly say—*By the aid of these we would have set all to rights.* How absurd! Much like the folly of another kind, when young girls, looking in their glasses and turning their ringlets round their fingers, with great levity tell the philosophers of one and twenty who are about their toilet—*The doubling the number of the Tiers Etat has been the cause of all.* Thus by the aid of two or three phrases, a political
vade

vade mecum is composed, with which such persons seem to be perfectly satisfied.

I have still a few words to bestow on a reproach which is akin to that I have last discussed. It is said that all possible means should at least have been employed to influence elections. But have such persons imagined the means by which twelve hundred members, elected, not by a certain number of landholders, but by all the inhabitants of a kingdom like France, may be influenced? And suppose that, with great difficulty though little probability, a preference might have been gained in favour of a few; was it for the king to have set the example of intrigue and corruption, in seeking to obtain votes? I will omit morality, and ask, would it have been politic, on any calculation, for an advantage so small, thus to have dishonoured the fame of majesty? The only persons who can regret that means so contemptible were not employed, must be the enemies of government, who are desirous that it should be guilty of error, to authorise their suspicions and excuse their injustice. Beside, only considering for a moment the interest
of

of the royal authority, I ask how those persons could have previously been known who should hereafter oppose that authority? By what spirit of divination, what magic, could any man presage that the monarch ought to have suspected men long accustomed to receive his benefits; men who openly travelled the high road of ambition, and who were attached, some to the court, some to the ministry, some to the first bodies of the state, and others to the conducting the affairs of the first families in France? How could the temper and the character of a multitude of citizens, elected members, be foreseen; some of whom, on account of their youth, and others from their previous employments, were scarcely known; and who for the first time in their lives gave their opinion on politics in the National Assembly? All these men, new to the world, new to public affairs, were formed by circumstances, and put in motion by the impetuous breath of opinion. Had it blown in a contrary direction, we perhaps should have seen them act in a different manner.

A small number of exceptions should be made; and I would be more explicit, did I not desire to avoid being personal. But I have

have sufficiently answered the objection I had to examine ; and I shall conclude with a remark applicable to this discussion. If, previous to the convocation of the States General, it had been thought indispensably necessary to corrupt by intrigue the deputies of the nation, together with the elective assemblies and the various inhabitants of the forty-three thousand communities of the kingdom, I would without hesitation rather have advised the king to renounce any such convocation. Much less difficulty and inconvenience would have resulted from one case than from the other ; and having once sacrificed all ideas of true dignity, every noble and generous tenet, and all union of moral and political principles, my advice should have been to have continued the former government. Nor am I convinced, considering what was the progress of opinion at that time, and the confidence that was placed in me, that it would have been impossible for me to have induced the people to forget, at least during my administration, their recent wishes for the calling of the States General.

But I had considered that the assembling of the national representatives round the throne

was

was a thought worthy both of the heart and of the understanding; and that it ought not to be degraded by a system of corruption. On the contrary I imagined that elevated sentiments better became so noble an enterprize, and that such sentiments deserved to be encouraged and increased. I farther thought that at the moment of a convocation like this, inspired by the public good, and assembled in the name of the nation, every tie of confidence and fraternity would give additional strength. I believed gratitude to be the greatest of pleasures; and that an act so generous, on the part of the monarch, would but increase the affections of his subjects. I should have blushed to suppose that slavery was more nearly allied to love than liberty. But the error which I and all France have been guilty of, was that of not foreseeing that, in this philosophical age, systems and theories, those idols of the understanding, would obtain the first homage, and obliterate every other form of worship.

Assisted by the other ministers, I was therefore satisfied with writing to the men in office, throughout the provinces, to direct, to the best of their abilities, the choice of the people

people towards worthy representatives ; and we contented ourselves with seconding the recommendation of the king, which was contained in these terms, in his letter for the convocation of the States General.

“ His majesty particularly expects that the
“ voice of conscience will alone be listened to
“ in the choice of deputies to the States General. He exhorts the electors to recollect
“ that men of understanding deserve the preference ; and that, from a happy agreement between morals and politics, it seldom happens, in public and national affairs, that the most virtuous men are not also
“ the most able.”

At present a maxim like this may perhaps be laughed at, and men may think they are reading ancient fables. Let them suspend their judgments, let them wait till a man shall appear in their assembly of superior talents, in every sense of the word, and endowed with the gift of distinguishing and combining all the vigour of virtue with all the rectitude of sound judgment ; and it will then be seen whether he will be impeded by his morality ; it will be seen whether he will not be greater than any of the present great, and whether

he will not attract to himself all the new raised troops of this assembly.

I have still an objection to answer. But first perhaps it will be necessary to apologize to the victorious party, for the attention I pay to the reproaches of its antagonists. I hear them say—Are they not subdued? Have we not diffused light every where? Have we not our correspondents, our daily papers, which dictate laws to opinion, and at our will agitate the public, and excite the passions to the precise degree we think necessary? Some of us command in the east, others in the west. This man speaks the language best adapted to the inhabitants of the plain, that delivers himself in the rude dialect of the mountaineers. All is properly provided for; from one end of the kingdom to the other the people are taught, by each day's post, how to feel and what to think. You experienced this yourselves when you passed through *Vesoul* and *Arcis-sur-Aube*: half a page was sufficient to inform you of the reception you were there to meet with.

I am well aware that every precaution is taken to guide the faith of the French. But
something

Something farther is necessary for Europe, and for posterity. Our affairs and our disputes are best understood at a distance. Ideas arrive there unincumbered and in a manner purified from the first effervescence of passion. Truth is there not only separated from falsehood ; but all the knots likewise of disguise, insinuation, exaggeration, and empiricism, are untied. Men place themselves in the centre of the two extremes, and have thus a nearer view of each than either of them individually has of the other. Hence a severe examination will soon be held before the august tribunal of reason, which shall direct futurity in its immutable judgment concerning the present race. And that my cause may there be heard, I forbear to confound it with that of others, and think proper to reply to the different reproaches of different parties.

The following then is the new objection of which I spoke. “ If means of corruption
“ must have been avoided, because they were
“ thought impracticable, we should at least
“ have been inspired ; by exerting the royal
“ authority more energy should have been
“ displayed ; the rising troubles should have
“ been stopped in their progress, by mea-

“ fures more vigorous ; and all poffible acci-
“ dents fould have been boldly encoun-
“ tered.”

But would this have been a wife fyftem in the month of July 1789 ? And fince the difaffection of the troops and the general arming of the kingdom, have the chances become more favourable ?

To me it feems that the partifans of violent meafures, who dread not the miferies of civil war, might be requested to accompany their reproaches and their advice with a plan for taking the field, which fould at leaft be applicable to fome one of thofe circumftances in which the king was placed. This would not be requiring too much of thofe who treat with difdain the prudent and wife plans adopted by government ; and who regret, but always in general terms, the want of force and rigour. Diffuffions on public affairs muft become purely ideal and fcholaflic, if feparated from an eftimate of the means of execution ; and it is unhappily thus that, after a certain period, the theory only remains of any political queftion, and the decifion has no relation to things as they really were.

Perhaps it will be faid that there had been

insurrections before the revolution of the month of July 1789, and previous to the limitations which events and legislative decrees prescribed to the royal authority, and that a single example would then have been effectual. Only two such insurrections, worthy of notice, can however be quoted. One at Paris in the Fauxbourg St. Antoine, which was immediately quelled by the military power; and the other at Marseilles, which was not the effervescence of a moment; it was supported by the majority of the citizens; it was in the spirit of the times; and I believe that, had violent measures been rashly used, and preferred to that cautious mode which allayed the storm without bloodshed, much danger would have been incurred. The chance of revolt in a city so populous as that of Marseilles, a city in which the pestiferous vapours are arrested, and where the plague is as it were held prisoner, a city which thus acts as the protector of the whole kingdom the chance I say of revolt in such a city presents dangers so great, so terrible to the imagination, that we ought still to bless, with all the worthy citizens of Marseilles, those wise expedients by which it was prevented.

Burthened as I am by thoughts the most afflicting, I still have the right to shew that, in the course of events the most unexpected, the most strange, and amid the suspicions and agitations by which they have been preceded and followed, I say, amidst tempests so numerous it was the prudence and moderation of government, and the circumspection of its measures, which probably prevented the general subversion of the kingdom.

In fine, and I have already alluded to this idea, I early saw the minds of men hurried away by every kind of project. I was diffident of an unknown power, which, while directing the public opinion, enveloped its progress and final purposes in a cloud : and I was led to think the attachment of the nation to the person of his majesty, a sensation ever precious, might again become the support of royalty. Guided by a reflection, the effect of which doubtless appeared even to myself infinitely uncertain, but the importance of which fixed my attention, my endeavours were eager after such caution and such acts of moderation, as might ensure to the king the affection of his people.

I dwell

I dwell thus minutely on the inconveniences necessarily resulting from the means of corruption and the inconsiderate use of power, that, as I have said before, I may answer the accusations of every party. I shall be asked perhaps, why I did not at least employ more care and circumspection to gain the good opinion of men of the first influence among the commons?

I have never been deficient in any attentions which they have a right to expect, and have always outstripped them by the observance of every species of deference that the multiplicity of my occupations would permit; but to have submitted to their yoke and the laws it imposed, I must have parted with all manly dignity and honourable pride. Many of them had early discovered how fond they were of the overbearing tone of authority. Nothing that was bestowed proved acceptable, nothing voluntarily resigned on the part of government answered their wishes; they were desirous of extorting what would willingly have been given, and of obtaining by violence whatever they possessed. Sensibility, gratitude, and all the mild affections, were foreign to their nature, or considered as unworthy of an elevated policy; and as my soul has been

always susceptible of these emotions, it was scarcely possible that we should walk together. In one of my discourses, I know not on what occasion, my voice faltered for a moment in consequence of the agitation of my mind. *Ha! he is a man of feeling*, said one of the most distinguished of the deputies; *he cannot therefore be a statesman*. How ruinous a supposition, if it were considered as a general axiom! It may be said with much greater truth, that in administration, as well as in every other sort of commerce, obduracy of heart is attended with sterility of ideas; the mind possesses one sense the less, and a sense too the most sagacious and useful of all.

There is also another point in which I cannot agree with these gentlemen. They have too plainly demonstrated that they are indifferent what means they employ to arrive at their end: whereas it is my opinion that there is always an honourable path for conducting us to every object not unworthy of our desires, which, though it may be longer, we ought nevertheless to prefer; and without the observance of this excellent moral principle, which creates respect and confidence, no pursuit can be brought to its full completion. What constraint

strait and violence have they not been obliged to practise in the road they have taken! What a detestable use has been made of terror and threats! With what characters has it not been necessary they should associate! With what hideous spectres have they not surrounded the cradle of liberty, that cradle which the paternal hands of the best of princes had prepared with such generous affection! Alas! after so many advances on his part, there needed nothing perhaps but virtue on the part of the assembly, to complete the enterprize. What different means have been preferred, when with a little moderation of system, a little consideration for the oppressed, a little respect for long established opinions, and a little gentleness and good will, France might with silken cords have been conducted to its felicity! I have always seen a confederation of force and cunning, never of sublime thoughts and generous sentiments, and for that reason I have been unable, from sympathy, taste and inclination, to unite with the leaders of the popular party. Beside, as it soon became a part of their policy to attack me with all their weapons, and their weapons were numerous, I could not without degrading myself have taken any measures to
conci-

conciliate their favour ; and it is perhaps an additional homage to liberty and a proof of unchangeable affection, to have remained faithful to its cause, notwithstanding the rough and ferocious manners of its modern knights-errant.

In speaking of the principal leaders of the National Assembly, it becomes me to bear public testimony to the worth of a considerable number of deputies who unite to the genuine character of citizens the most respectable moral qualities, and who only want perhaps a more melodious voice and a greater confidence in their intentions and talents. It is with them I would harmonize ; it is with them I would co-operate in the advancement of happiness and liberty, without any of the concussions and disorders of anarchy, and particularly without the attendants of ferocity, without tumultuous clamours, without incendiary torches, without an axe, without decapitation.

It would have been necessary, in order to put in motion the admirable elements existing in the National Assembly, that the eloquence of virtue should have been more frequently heard. But that species of it which belongs to a feeling heart and a dignified character

we have seldom seen displayed there in any superior degree. We are apt at first sight to imagine that the eloquence of reasoning is the only one congenial with public affairs, and we are inclined to suppose that every other language is a Syren against whose allurements we ought to be on our guard. But reasoning, in proportion as it extends and becomes complicated, does not owe its triumph always to truth; mental fatigue or implicit faith frequently succeeds in procuring it slaves; whereas the most ordinary capacities have the power of judging, without effort and as it were by instinct, of every thing which respects feeling, and of every thing indeed that is sublime. They are therefore the more easily misled when we address them in a language which they cannot reconcile to their internal sensations, and cannot prove by this touchstone which they have received from the hands of nature.

But I return to some other instance of my public conduct which it becomes me to explain. I remember to have heard that my political opinions were not sufficiently definite and individual. But it is not to be supposed that a minister can give to them so bold a

relief as the leader of a party, as it is incumbent on him to make himself no farther conspicuous than his means and his influence extend, for fear of disparaging the government of which he forms a part. It ought also to be observed that in the case of civil dissensions it is the system of the stronger party alone that appears to advantage; their projects are accompanied with activity and success, and these are the two indications that most evidently unfold a design. The minister, on the contrary, who is subjected to the judgment of the sovereign, to the restraint of law and the competition of events, is unable to give to his opinion, conceived in the silence of meditation, the character of the original spring of the proceedings of government.

After my present work however has been read, which gives a view of the principal measures in which I was concerned, the character of my political administration will be distinctly perceived. It will particularly be seen that, from the report of council of the 27th of December 1788, an epocha when the foundation of constitutional liberty was completely laid, I have invariably proceeded towards one and the same point, I have always had
before

before me the same object, the object of my constant wishes, and which may thus be described in a few words: *Every degree of freedom that in a great monarchy can be made consistent with the maintenance of public order: every concession in favour of the people that can be reconciled with justice.* Both these principles are vast in their extent, yet are they comprehended in two ideas of a superior magnitude, morality and happiness.

In pursuing these reflections as a philosopher, a citizen, and the friend of humanity, I did not lose sight of what was due to the king from one of the depositaries of his confidence. I never advanced a step without having received his orders; I never delivered a sentiment that was not conformable to his own. The obligations of ministers are reduced to a very narrow compass now that they are responsible only to the nation, and are degraded to the rank of agents to the National Assembly: but formerly their duties were more extensive; and for that reason it would have been out of my power, at the commencement of my administration, to describe beforehand and in a single sketch the map of my route. It is true I have constantly

ly

ly walked on the same line ; but, from the nature of my situation, it could not be the shortest that might be drawn between two given points. We do not ask an engineer to trace out a road across rocks and precipices ; it is thought prudent and advisable to wind round the hills and the valleys, that the road may be the more safe, and the apprehensions of the traveller dispelled.

A representative assembly alone can make a grand and spacious march : being the image of the national wish, the whole country is its domain ; and strong in this wish, its empire is boundless. While opinion does not rise up against it, it can draw its immense rolling-stone over men and things, unimpeded by any obstacles. The consolation it offers for the bruises inflicted by this violent pressure, is the general extent of the injury ; and it is the peculiar and sad privilege of the assembly to diminish the effect of the evil by increasing its influence.

There is one essential measure respecting which my private sentiments could not be distinctly avowed ; I refer to the National Assembly being formed of one or more chambers.

bers. The division into three chambers, as was first proposed, it was manifestly impossible to support. The probability of uniting the sentiments of four different parties in digesting one constitution, small in itself, appeared still smaller at a time when so many abuses were to be reformed, and it was so necessary to enter immediately on the business; when a long series of misfortunes had diffused a new light through the whole kingdom, and had fixed the reign of public opinion on a foundation which could never be destroyed.

It was a great oversight in the two first orders not to have discovered in time, that a National Assembly formed nearly on the model of the English one, was the utmost they could hope to obtain when the minds of men were in a ferment and the party of the commons increased daily in strength. This form of government, which they would not listen to for a moment when it was first proposed, they have since perhaps regretted they did not patronise. It is seldom that large bodies of men act with foresight; the common feelings that influence them spring from the memory; and they can never feel the force of those numerous perceptions which are indispensably

penfably neceffary in calculating the future. The king himfelf had a diflike for the Englifh conftitution and every thing that refembled it; doubtlefs becaufe he found it too wide from the ideas and principles to which he had been habituated. But times are strangely altered!

The king however, in directing his attention to the future conformation of the States General, would have fpoken for the firft time to the National Affembly of two chambers, if he had adopted the plan which I fubmitted to his examination in the month of June. The events of the month of July having produced a confiderable change in the fituation of affairs, I might have refumed the idea on my return from Bâle, and I fpoke of it in converfation with various deputies: but at this period the commons thought only how to derive advantage from the new face of things, and they were no longer fatisfied with political meafures which at any preceding time they would have accepted with eagernels. It may be doubted whether, in fixing a permanent conftitution, they did right to prefer a legislative body confifting of a fingle affembly; it may be doubted whether they were
right

right in speaking of English liberty with such disdain, a liberty that has the judgment of all Europe in its favour, and the unanimous voice of a whole nation, happy and prosperous under a constitution to which the experience of a century has made them every day more attached. These were considerations that merited, in my opinion, a closer examination; and the security of freedom was their best recommendation, since, to judge from events, the rapidity of legislative determinations may otherwise prove dangerous to freedom itself.

A memorable circumstance seems to give additional force to this reflection. It is the adoption of two houses or divisions by the American nation, a nation that has founded its liberty far from the tumult of Europe, and by reading, like ourselves, the history of the world and the annals of the human heart. In the mean time, how much more dangerous is it in a country like France, that the whole power of legislation should vest in a single house and depend on a single vote; a country where the fickleness of the national character renders caution so necessary in the legislator; a country infinitely populous, and where all

the inhabitants, allied to each other by a common feeling, can be actuated by one and the same impulse ; a country where the unavoidable mixture of enormous luxury and the extreme poverty, will ever keep alive the desire of a change of situation ; a country that is not, like America, devoted solely to agriculture, but where a considerable portion of the inhabitants, employed in manufactures and the service of the rich, are found in crowds in the midst of our corrupt cities ; a country where morality and a religious spirit are on the decline, and no longer afford an adequate barrier to the wild fallies of the passions ; a country, in short, where an habitual intercourse with other nations can the more readily produce events favourable to revolutions ! Such a country requires a legislative body whose steps are regular and circumspect, and that never deceives itself ; that takes care to be always respected, and of consequence always obeyed. It requires it the more, because the lowest class of the people have been called into action, and we have given them opinions without being able to give them knowledge. For this reason we are obliged to present to them always the same idea, the

same prospect, and we are no longer at liberty to make the changes which wisdom dictates, and circumstances frequently render necessary.

A single chamber will, I fear, supply perpetual fuel to discontent and sedition. A hope will be entertained of being able to influence its deliberations, of being able to direct them, and, which is still more dangerous, of being able to alter them. One source of strength and power will only be seen; and every movement, every exertion will have that for its central point. Could we penetrate into the secrets of the human heart, we should see that the attachment to a single chamber is chiefly derived from a desire of sharing in the authority that will surround it, an authority irregular, divided in every sense of that word, and the enjoyment of which is mistaken for the charm of liberty. What is to be feared however above all things in political societies, is the continual exercise of an unjust opposition that has no fixed and definite bounds. Every species of check however in the political machine tends to render its motions more slow and circumspect; and who will economise time when a nation is at stake? The means of doing good once secured, we

have only to guard against disorder, the great enemy of constitutions, which levels its artillery at their foundations, and shakes the whole fabric.

It is manifestly of the utmost importance at the æra of a great revolution, when the deputies are called upon to reform the whole code of laws, political, civil, and criminal, and the task they have to execute is in the utmost degree arduous, that they should aim as much as possible at unanimity in their thoughts and deliberations : but this cannot be when the whole legislative power vests for a continuance in one chamber.

A great aversion was early displayed for every improvement derived from the governments of other nations ; and it is too apparent that the fear of imitation has constantly influenced the minds of the National Assembly, and that they have carried their passion for novelty to a degree of weakness. This passion however is frequently a very dangerous sentiment in so old a world, and when applied to objects of so ancient a date as morality, legislation and policy.

We should with difficulty pardon the architect of a theatre of amusement if, from a
desire

desire of differing from other artists, he should subject us to inconvenience : and how much less pardonable is it in the architects of a political society, when, from a similar dislike of imitation, they deprive us of the advantages to be derived from such principles of government as are best known and have been most fully tried !

The power lodged with the king of refusing his sanction to legislative decrees, is doubtless a provision of a salutary tendency ; but it is necessary that the use of it should be wholly unrestricted ; it is necessary that ministers should not be obliged to shew an unreserved deference to every idea of the National Assembly ; that their existence should not depend on this deference ; that popular commotions should be restrained, and no terrors be suspended over the throne : lastly, it is necessary that the royal negative, a mode of resistance equally wise and moderate, should not be a power never to be called into use. To secure to this power the assistance of opinion, it is also necessary that the king should choose for his council men of the most enlightened minds, who possess the greatest share of the national confidence, and, if it be possible, whose situation

ation and characters are most independent. I know of no other means calculated to remedy a part of the evils inseparable from a legislative assembly when formed into one deliberative body.

The good of the state also requires, on various accounts, that the royal sanction should be free, and considered as such, not by means of a fiction, not by any counterfeit belief, but by the inimitable ascendancy of truth. It is thus only the dignity of the monarch can be preserved, and that he will never be reduced to the degrading situation of being obliged to execute what he does not approve. It is then the nation will believe in the real association of the will of the prince with that of the National Assembly, and that the operation of the executive power will suddenly become more easy, more gentle and more efficacious.

I pursue the train of my thoughts. The constitution of the National Assembly into a single chamber, by which so many powers are concentrated in one point, seems to be a new motive for inducing them to give additional splendor to the majesty of the throne; not only in order to maintain a sort of equilibrium in the state, but also because the king, standing
alone

alone in contrast with the assembly, would find himself in so detached a situation as must gradually weaken the executive power that was vested in him. The assembly however, far from pursuing the path which these reflections point out, have stripped the chief of the empire of all the attributes which tended to support the idea of his elevated station, and have at the same time deprived him of every thing which constitutes moral dominion, the only dominion that invariably commands respect and captivates obedience. They have left the king no influence either in ecclesiastical preferments, or in the choice of judges, or magistrates of the police, or municipal officers, or governors of the departments and districts, or commanders of the national guard, or the new superintendants of public order, a train band that is to supply the place of the *Maré-chaussée* ; in short, all army and navy promotions are subjected to almost invariable rules ; and, as if it were too great an indulgence to have restored to the king the power of financial appointments, they have obliged him to accept new directors of the posts from the farmers general at present in office ; and this minute restriction has been fixed by a legislative

Q 4

decree.

decree. It is certainly possible that nominations to offices might in general be equally judicious, were all influence on the part of government superseded: but a king who has nothing to confer, is obeyed merely by courtesy. This is not all: they have not left the monarch the right of bestowing the least encouragement, the smallest gratuity, without the preliminary consent of the National Assembly; and the reporter of the committee of pensions, who, under the inspection of the Assembly, which must necessarily be rapid, has at this moment the regulation of the whole list, has more of the necessary requisites to be king of France than the descendant of Hugh Capet. As the last extinction of every species of influence on the part of the chief of the nation, and as the last privation, a privation the most painful perhaps of all to the king's feelings, the National Assembly has reserved to itself alone the distribution of such reliefs as temporary calamities or the misfortunes of individuals so often render necessary. The king can no longer be charitable and compassionate but as a private individual; he is no longer permitted to have any share in great public virtues; he must tear himself from all his habits,

habits, and renounce the sweetest enjoyments that are annexed to authority: he is still allowed to fix how many armed men are necessary for supporting the execution of vengeance and inflicting punishments; but charities are regulated and distributed without his participation, or at least without any other concurrence on his part than that of a formal sanction. They are beside the various committees of the assembly who prepare, draw up, and decide every thing, and in their hands is the whole administration; for legislation applied to all sorts of details, is government itself. There remains with the king the choice of his ministers; but this choice is precarious, since it depends on the disposition of the clubs and coffee-houses of Paris, and particularly on the will of those who influence this disposition. In the midst even of his council the monarch has no decisive power, since all the chiefs of the departments may refuse to obey his will, alleging as an excuse for their resistance the severe responsibility that is imposed on them. In short, in the very city where he resides, in the palace which he inhabits, he is without authority; his safety depends on the orders that are given by the municipal officers; he has no influence

ence in any regulations, any precautions of police ; and descending by degrees to the last step of power, if he were to ask for a puppet-show to amuse the dauphin, he would want the protection of the mayor of Paris.

No kingdom ever presented so complete a picture of the total annihilation of royal authority. The king of France, or of the French, is nothing more than a secretary of the commands of the National Assembly, and an official serjeant of its will ; and it is a cruel mockery to boast, as is daily done, of the exaltation of his glory and the additional lustre of his throne.

The government of a country peopled with twenty-six millions of souls, and extending over twenty-five thousand square leagues, beside important colonies, is at present composed of so many springs that the least popular effort can break or impair them. This must at least be confessed, even if we choose to reserve to ourselves the right of contesting that it is the best government possible ; even if we choose to contend, though experience has not a word to say in its favour, that, for the maintenance of order, there is need neither of a centre to so many parts, nor of a high executive power,

power, nor of the assistance of royal majesty, that venerable majesty which at once subjugates and gives a charm to obedience ; that majesty, which, exhibiting the national grandeur in its purity, and collecting its rays within a narrow circle, obtains a distinguished empire over the imaginations of men. It is different with political corps ; they can indeed maintain the authority that appertains to legislative functions, because these functions have something abstract about them which familiarity does not render contemptible. But when they desire to assume an active character, and to address themselves immediately to individuals, it is then evident that they are deficient in weight ; and this deficiency is ascribable in the first place to the absolute parity between those who command and those who are to obey ; and in the second not unfrequently to the discordancy of the elements of which a numerous assembly is composed.

The National Assembly seems to have a consciousness of this truth ; for if we observe attentively what news is most gratifying and affords it the greatest pleasure, we shall find it almost always to be the information of some new instance of obedience or promise of submission.

mission. Humility is above all things pleasing to it ; and there is nothing which it will not forget, there is no offence which it will not pardon on such an atonement.

I hesitate not in saying that the political hierarchy* established by the National Assembly, seems to require more than any other social institution, the efficacious interposition of the monarch. This august mediation perhaps can alone preserve the distances between such a multiplicity of powers crowding upon one another, between so many representatives whose titles are equal, and official characters originally equal, and still so near to each other by the nature of their functions and the fugacity of their prerogatives ; it can alone give reality to those abstract and conventional gradations, which are from henceforth to compose the scale of government.

I perceive at present—

Primary assemblies who name an electoral corps ;

This electoral corps who chooses deputies to the National Assembly ;

* In using the word *hierarchy* I take a licence which custom has lately authorised, as from its etymology it is only applicable to ecclesiastical government.

This

This assembly who makes decrees and calls upon the king to sanction and promulgate them ;

The king who sends them to the departments ;

The departments who transmit them to the districts ;

The districts who give orders to the municipalities ;

The municipalities who, in executing these decrees, require in cases of emergency the assistance of the national guards ;

The national guards who ought to keep the people in awe ;

The people who ought to obey.

We see in this succession an order of numbers to which there is nothing to object : one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten ; they all follow one another, they are all linked together in perfection : but in government and obedience the general order is maintained by ties that connect and fasten together different authorities. The legislator would have too easy a task, if, in order to accomplish that great work, the subjection of the many to the wisdom of the few, he had only to conjugate the verb *to command*, and

to

to say as we do at school, I shall command, thou shalt command, he shall command, we shall command, &c. To establish an effective subordination, and secure the play of all the ascending and descending springs, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a proportional gradation of deference and respect between all superiorities by compact; it is necessary that from rank to rank there should be a distinction which excites veneration; and it is necessary that at the summit of this gradation there should be a power which, by a mixture of imagination and reality, acts on the whole of the political hierarchy, and maintains every thing in the order fixed by the legislator: but to weaken this first power, to adulterate its majesty, and to level at the same time all ranks of men, so completely that the abstract principle of law may receive no assistance from prejudice, is to put subordination in great danger; it is at least to leave it no other support than the fear of punishment and the exercise of vengeance, which are not merely inadequate, but will surround administration with all the apparatus of tyranny.

There is no country where the distinctions of rank are more obliterated than under the despotic

despotic government of the Califs of the east ; but there is also no country where punishments are more instantaneous, more severe, or more multiplied. The chief magistrates have a decoration that is sufficient for every thing ; and this is a retinue of janizaries, mutes, and executioners.

It is remarkable also that in the French legislation there will not only be an equality from the mode of election proceeding entirely from the people, an equality from the mixture of all conditions, an equality from the suppression of all distinctions of birth, an equality from an indifference as to every superiority of fortune and education ; but there will be also, in the constitution of the different authorities, this singular inconsistency, that the most extensive in their sphere of action will be the weakest in their power of enforcing obedience. I shall explain myself. The administrators of the department, in defending the rights or opinions of their constituents, will have a very considerable power of opposing the decisions of the National Assembly ; but they will have very little power over the administrators of the districts, who will speak in the name of persons immediately interested,
in

in the midst of whom they reside, and who will be united by the sympathy of opinion.

The same observation is more strikingly applicable to all the orders which the districts will have to give to the municipalities of the chief towns ; for these municipalities are composed of men equal to the administrators of districts, and frequently superior to them in knowledge, education and fortune : prompted therefore by self-love, which is the ordinary effect of these advantages, they will not be easily directed by their equals the districts ; they will be able to oppose them whenever they please, their ideas being more enlightened, more founded on the particular circumstances of the town whose interest they superintended ; and, supported by the approbation of their fellow citizens, they will soon arrive at the consciousness of their power.

In fine these municipal officers whose functions continue only for two years, and who have not time enough to derive consideration from the importance of their duties ; these temporary magistrates, whose principal object it will be to secure their re-election, and the sphere of whose authority relates to their own electors, electors with arms in their hands,

hands, and decorated with the appellation of National Guards, cannot reasonably be expected to maintain a sufficient reverence and decorum, with no other means for that purpose than a gold button or a scarf. I can more readily conceive of the subordination in the lower order, that is, the subordination of the people to the national guards; although even this is not free from difficulty: confident in their numbers it may be that they will not attend very accurately to the subtle distinction of active and non-active citizens; it may be that they will suspect that the system of equality ought to be less rigid in its limits, and may prove sufficiently unmanageable in circumstances where their interests excite them to resistance.

There are various expedients simple in themselves, and by no means inconsistent with the principles of the constitution, which the National Assembly might in my opinion have introduced in aid of the maintenance of subordination.

It would have been easy for example to have given to the election of the administrators of the department a priority over the election of the administrators of the districts, and to

this election a priority over that of the officers of the municipalities: thus the choice would have been unfettered by striking off this and that name to be employed in inferior services, and the best citizens would have been reserved for the highest situations.

It would have been easy to establish a greater difference in the number of persons constituting the different corps; to have augmented the administrators of departments and districts; or to have diminished the municipal officers and the Notables of the great towns.

It would have been easy to have fortified the ascendancy of the higher corps over the lower by establishing a greater difference between the duration of the functions of the individuals composing them.

Lastly, it would have been easy to have extended the period necessary to elapse between a man's filling an office in the superior administrations for the first and second time, and thus the more considerable corps would have been less subjected than the rest to the necessity of caressing the multitude. These four provisions, the quality, the number, the duration, and the independence of the administrators, would have somewhat favoured
ed

ed the maintenance of authority and subordination.

I will add, for the desire of the public good and a veneration for truth will always be my most powerful motives, that national guards perpetually in arms, and empowered to choose their own officers and commandants, will be the kings of our kings. I do not controvert the eminent services that many of these respectable corps, and that of Paris above all, have rendered in these times of discord; but I must believe that the maintenance of a force like this at the last round of the political ladder, will with difficulty be reconciled to the general principles of order and subordination.

Finally, when the National Assembly has bestowed upon the king no higher appellation than that of chief minister of the state and head of the executive power, they have thrown an impenetrable darkness upon the degree of his legal authority over the administrative corps, and they have as little ascertained by what means they design that the king should enforce obedience to his commands. That of an armed force does not exist, since it is only to be called into exercise by the administrators of departments, of the districts,

or of the municipalities. That of promises and threats is equally null in the hands of the monarch, since he has not the power of doing either good or harm to any person. The right of suspending the disobedient corps, is not granted to the executive power, and it would be attended with inconvenience in a constitution where all the administrators are elected by the people without any interposition on the part of the sovereign. Shall he order the civil tribunal to take cognizance of the administrative corps that are refractory? But by what means shall he oblige these tribunals to be obedient to his orders? Beside, the constitution does not give them this kind of superiority over the administrative corps, and even if they possessed it, would five or six judges appointed by the people dare to arraign the conduct of an administration whose resistance seemed perfectly to chime in with the interest of their electors? Lastly, shall it be to the examination of the high court of justice that these crimes shall be referred? But it is the legislative body alone that can bring accusations before this court. The king then has no choice left but the power of presenting his charges to the National Assembly.

What

What a function ! And should it happen, as we have reason to suppose, that this assembly is not always sitting, the king will be reduced to the necessity of making notes during the vacations, that he may be able to present a statement of his grievances when the legislative corps shall again assemble. Such an obligation on the part of the monarch, is the most degrading, the most incompatible with dignity, that it is possible to conceive. An accuser for six months, a spy for the remaining six, he will only be called off from these two honourable functions by the execution of the judgments of which the National Assembly will deliver him the mandate. I could have wished to discover the moment when it would be possible for him to do something in order to make himself loved ; but I cannot find it. It will be necessary, if I may so express myself, that he should live on his old stock of liberalities, as all future harvests are interdicted him for ever : and thus, while the means of resistance are multiplied in various ways, and this resistance proceeds step by step in an increasing ratio, it seems to be the intention to diminish the authority of the chief of the nation, to humble, to tarnish, in short, the

majesty of the throne ; and I look in vain through the whole circle for that wisdom and extent of view which ought to characterize legislators*.

I am

* This paragraph was written, and my whole work finished, before I learned the last decree of the National Assembly respecting the administrative corps. They have given to the king by this decree the power of suspending the functions of an assembly of department who shall be guilty of actual disobedience ; but at the same time this assembly is authorised to make known to the legislature the orders that may have been transmitted to them in the king's name, and which *they may have supposed* to be contrary to the laws. Thus, upon the mere opinion of an assembly of department, an immediate and open dispute before the legislature will take place, between the responsible minister, speaking in the name of the king, and the assembly of department ; and the minister perhaps will be summoned to the bar to justify the motives of his conduct and plead his cause against one or a number of members chosen by the assembly of department. Can we seriously imagine, unless where the delinquency of the administrators should be incontrovertible, that the minister would be desirous of exposing himself to a scene like this, and of risking at the same time the dignity of the sovereign ?

This is not all. The minister may perhaps be disposed to run the hazard of suspending from their functions an assembly of administrators ; but as the movement of the whole interior machine depends upon them, he must first be sure of the disposition of the other members of the department who are to supply the place of these administrators ;
and

I am well aware of the various considerations that were calculated to turn off their attention

and if they are disinclined, he must make the same enquiry among the persons who form the neighbouring districts : but who will care to accept this momentary office on the recommendation of a minister from whom they can expect nothing, and on the perilous security of a single pleader at the bar of the National Assembly? It is a civility that he could scarcely expect from his own clerks.

I may ask also how the minister will arrive at the exact knowledge of the abuses of power and neglect of duty reprehensible in the administrators, since in each department these very men will be his only regular correspondents? The committee of Constitution has in its new decree done all that it could do from ancient documents; but in their attempts to erect a new authority every thing necessarily retains somewhat of the defective foundations on which they are obliged to build. We may search as long as we please, but there are only three ways of securing such an authority: the constant and well known power of rewarding and punishing on the part of those who command, and the ideas of fear and hope which they may make use of without imposition; or the constant habit of respect towards them supported by the splendour of their situations, and especially by the veneration due to the majesty of the sovereign, of whom they are the organs; or peremptory coercion, by means of an armed force. Of all these government has been deprived, and it is only in the form of accusation before the legislative corps, that it can act with any efficacy.

In the mean time, by a singular contradiction, ministers

tention from regards of a general nature ; but did it become the founders of a political constitution to appear the slaves of the moment ? Future ages ought to have engaged their thoughts, and while they abolished all other dominion that of posterity ought never to have been forgotten.

England is always cited as an example that

placed in this state of weakness, are not less constantly threatened with the most severe responsibility. It is from politeness, no doubt, that, after having tied their hands and feet, we tell them of the tricks they can play, and that we appear to be alarmed at it. Let us honestly confess, that it is not about what they will do, but what they dare not do, that we give ourselves any trouble ; for their weakness is much more to be feared than their courage.

A responsibility that shall operate as a check upon the actions of ministers is doubtless of consequence ; but a responsibility that shall be a check upon their inactivity, is necessary to the maintenance of social order.

The legislator ought to place himself as it were in the center between these two points of view, and never to deprive himself of the power of moving toward either. But he is soon entangled in snares that himself has spread, and can no longer strike off so much from the code of universal liberty as is due to the principles of order and subordination. One would suppose that he had composed his work on his return from Algiers or Morocco ; and that, filled with ideas of slavery, his mind had not perceived the moment when he arrived in the land of liberty.

a civil

a civil officer can succeed, without the means of constraint, in making himself obeyed ; but they wish not to see that in England this respect for the law is the result of public happiness, and the effect of long habit ; and that it is also the fruit of religion and morality, which are principles still highly respected by a nation that does not exclude good sense from its philosophy. They forget also to observe how many circumstances embellish the law in England and give it additional force ; circumstances that do not exist in the French constitution. Its representatives in parliament commonly hold their seats for seven years, a term that adds greatly to their consequence. The legislative assembly is divided into two houses, one of which consists of the peers of the realm, men distinguished for the extent of their possessions, and their exalted rank ; the other is composed of citizens whose education and attachment to the interests of the state are secured by the considerable property that is required to qualify them for being elected. The king's ministers are all members of parliament. Some, in right of birth, have seats in the upper house ; others, in right of election, are representatives of the people. The king enjoys the executive power

power in all its plenitude, and he is aided in the exercise of this power by the various appointments that are a part of his prerogative and the many favours of which he has the disposal. The bishops, the judges, the county sheriffs, and all persons more particularly concerned in the maintenance of public order, are chosen by the sovereign ; in a word every trust of a similar nature, those excepted that relate to the police and interests of cities and other large towns, are never entrusted to collective assemblies. Beside, none of those numerous hostilities, opposed in France to the executive power, none of those diminutions of the majesty of the throne, the inevitable effect of our new laws, have in England any existence. There the people are not kept in continual action by that diversity of elections which are assigned to them among us, and which every instant remind them of their power. The enormities also, which extreme wretchedness induces the lowest order of society to commit, are in a manner remedied in England by the immense relief of its poor rates ; and the most dangerous characters are removed from the midst of society by the transportation of malefactors to the colonies. Lastly, the

the king of England possesses the great and important privilege of dissolving the parliament, and ordering new elections. There is then no comparison between the means which the two governments can make use of for the maintenance of public order, without violence, or having recourse to any unusual expedient ; and yet France is four times more populous than England and Scotland taken together.

Let us confess the truth : Our legislators have preserved only the mummy of executive power ; whatever constituted its life and action exists no longer. Meanwhile we cannot bring this power to life again at our will ; for obedience and respect depend in a great measure on long habit ; and it would be an immense loss, a misfortune beyond calculation, to be obliged to create these sentiments anew by the infliction of punishments, and to begin with the operation of fear and terror. With how many troubles would not such an enterprize be accompanied ! It would have one striking character of greatness, it must be confessed ; for, like the creation of the world, it would rise out of chaos.

In reply to these different observations, no one I think will maintain, that order reigns at

present in the kingdom, and will assert with confidence that time and peace will effectually establish it. But in the first place, how can it be said that order exists, if the most shameful excesses are committed sometimes in one place and sometimes in another ; if alarms prevail to such a degree as to drive a great number of citizens from their ordinary habitations and even out of the kingdom ; if foreigners are discouraged from coming among us ; if it be regarded as an enterprize to pass through the country ; if the collection of the taxes has been subjected for some time past to every species of opposition ; if such feudal rights as remain are obtained but in part, and legal modes of redress are attended with danger ; if the departments and municipalities clash with one another ; if the intermediary corps sometimes exceed their powers, and sometimes dare not exercise them to their full extent ; and if the disposition of the people has an influence on the legislation itself ? In short how can we believe in the existence of this order, when we see an armed force so often resorted to ? Yet we know but a small part of the derangement of the springs ; the inventors of the machine are silent respecting every accident that is not of a conspi-

conspicuous nature, as they do not wish the imperfection of their work to be discovered; and, in the present impotency of the executive government, individuals are at a loss to know before what court they are to exhibit their complaints against the delinquency of administrators. Government can only recommend; it has no longer the means of rewarding or punishing; and in its promises or threats there would be an air of ridicule.

I have also my fears that a singular effect will arise from the political regulation established in the kingdom: it will perhaps be one day seen, and there are symptoms that already announce it, that this regulation, inadequate to the support of public order, is at the same time calculated to favour the despotism of the intermediary corps; for these corps will readily perceive, that the National Assembly, the only censor they have to dread, cannot, from the nature of its constitution and its numerous occupations, extend its inspection to the minuteness of detail; they will perceive also that the assembly will have great reason to keep well with them; and these two considerations will gradually make them less scrupulous in their proceedings; they

they will possess with individuals all the confidence resulting from the implied approbation of a superior they do not fear, and the apparent security of an overseer whose attention is diverted by other objects.

It would not be an uninteresting employment, to examine whether the despotism of the intermediary authorities, and their incapacity to maintain public order, two circumstances which seem to contradict each other, do not arise from the same cause, the want of superintendence or control on the part of the sovereign power. This would require the solution of another doubt; and that is, whether the numerous corps governed by other collective authorities, are the most perfect institution that can be adopted, and whether it would not be better that the agency should be simple when the first mover is complex, or the agency be complex when the first mover is simple.

I return to the subject of public order; it is at present the subject most worthy of attention, and it may not be unprofitable to enquire if, in the existing constitution, the future is likely to produce changes favourable or unfavourable to the spirit of subordination.

To

To encourage our hopes we are desired to look at the termination of the political troubles that at present divide the kingdom; a consideration, I confess, of no trivial importance: we see also that the opposition party, whose strength is insufficient to excite any real alarms, only serves to unite the sentiments of the bulk of the nation more closely. But we see at the same time that we are arrived at the period of transition from the old order to the new, and that at this moment of satisfaction and confidence the names of patriotism and liberty operate as a charm on the minds and hearts of all men. We perceive also that men are not only become enthusiastic in their ideas of liberty, but that they just begin to taste the sweets of those enjoyments which flow from the partition of authority; and that such are the divisions and subdivisions in this distribution, that what with persons electing, persons elected, and persons capable of being elected to the administrations of department and the administrations of districts, to municipal offices, commands, offices of deputies, judges, parish priests and bishops, the whole presents a spectacle of jubilee to the vanity and self-conceit of mankind. Since however every

new

new distribution of authority is thought to be an additional security for freedom, we may perhaps be told that the very gratification of vanity will be converted into a generous sentiment, and that this is the consummation of human felicity. But no; rivalships will insensibly spring up, and rivalry engenders discontent. At first the equal hopes of individuals are the bond of union, but soon the wounded pretensions of the disappointed will change into a source of discord. It is not yet perceived what will be the fatal consequences of the ambition and the jealousy which this new order of things will introduce. It was not in the first year after the death of Alexander, that the men who shared his empire between them fell into misunderstanding and war.

There is another circumstance of considerable moment, which, while it engages the attention of men in the same direction, serves also as a principle of union. An object of common interest engrosses at present the minds of the citizens; I mean the immense prospect presented to them in the sale of the church lands, now become the lands of the nation. Some men think of them as an object on which to place their fortune advantageously,

8 others

others to secure themselves against the hazard of loss from the assignats, and a third sort from the hope of profit from this species of traffic; add to this, that, when they are sold beyond the price at which they are estimated, the surplus is distributed to the municipalities, so that every one seems hastening to partake of the spoil, and the distribution of the parish bread engrosses universal attention.

One word more. It is a matter of public notoriety, that independently of the political hierarchy established in the kingdom, independently of the ostensible order of things, the authority of the National Assembly is also supported by a sort of adherence that does not belong to any regular system, which extends from Paris to the provinces, and even to the extremities of the kingdom; an adherence which is in many cases perilous, but which nevertheless tends to preserve so much of the scale of subordination as corresponds to its principles.

The different circumstances I have been enumerating have all their degrees of influence, but not one of them is calculated for duration; and when once their reign is concluded, all the events that are likely to arise

S

will

will produce continual difficulties. Such for instance will be the period when the whole amount of the new taxes shall be demanded ; such also would be a year of famine, a foreign war, or any other calamity out of the usual course.

It is to be hoped that the light of experience will gradually introduce such modifications and amendments as public order shall require ; but we are alarmed in the mean time at the multitude of springs that compose the machine. How many different links and combinations are there which must be carefully and assiduously maintained !

We are astonished and afflicted when we consider the extraordinary means that are employed to support the various parts of a system which do not accord ; they all serve as a reproach to the continual care that has been taken to diminish the executive power. There is no longer any force at the extremity of the beam ; this will perpetually be a subject of regret, since a much greater force will be necessary at any other point to put in motion the immense and colossal machine of the kingdom of France and her colonies.

Oh ! that there was at least an authority
suffi-

sufficient to prevent the violation of the most sacred duties of humanity ; sufficient to place the honour and the lives of men in safety ; sufficient to protect innocence ; sufficient to put a stop to those horrible crimes, of which the town of Aix has just given a new example ! We have had enough of them both for our misfortune and our shame. Yet after so many instances, three other victims have been sacrificed to the power of the people. In vain do you attempt to divert our feelings, you tribe of unworthy writers who tell us of these assassinations with such an air of levity : vile advocates of the tiger, you are more barbarous than the tiger himself, when you recount with so much apathy the ravages he has committed. It was in the asylum of their own houses that these innocent citizens were sought after ; they were torn from the bosoms of their distracted families ; they were dragged with infamous chains to the market-place, and by a refinement of cruelty was their punishment prepared and this work of iniquity completed. In the morning they had seen the light of day and had risen from their beds free from apprehension, in the evening they expire under the homicide hands of their bre-

thren. They had conceived life to be in the number of their rights, and they find no defender. It is at a distance from the tears of their children, their wives and their friends that they are immolated ; it is without being able to turn upon them a parting look, that they are devoted to the most horrid sacrifice ; no time for repentance is allowed them, all the consolations of religion are denied, and they are plunged into the abyss of death without any other accompaniment than the guilty shouts of their executioners. These ideas torture my heart, and I cannot dwell upon them without horror. And who in the mean time were the victims ? An old man eighty years of age, who had long been a magistrate, who was a celebrated advocate, an old administrator of Provence, a man distinguished for his eloquent writings in favour of liberty ; but he could not go all the lengths of the revolution doctrines, and he had shown, they said, some regret when the old magistracy was demolished. Ah ! it is doubtless necessary we should find crimes in the persons whom we sacrifice., This was the function of the Feymas and the Laubardemonts, the last supporters of despotism. But we have no

faith in your assertions, when you tell us of the crimes of those who have been put to death without being heard ; we believe you not when, walking over their tomb, you bring accusations against them which they have no longer the power of answering. So long as the people were oppressed it was glorious to undertake their defence ; but now that they only are in power, that they are the universal sovereign, it becomes us either to quit the court of the tyrant, or to be bold enough to live in it without flattery and without adulation.

We can no longer distinguish the features of that people formerly so mild and compassionate ; they are become ravenous for destruction and impatient for revenge ; and what terrifies me still more, they join words of merriment to the most barbarous thoughts, and their songs, like those of the American savages, are the cries of death. Even age and reputation are no restraint on their violences ; they seek, like the children of Israel, victims without spot, and their murderous hands tremble not at the tears of decrepitude and the blood of innocence. Nation, whom I have so dearly loved, whom I have so
S 3 highly

highly celebrated, what are you become? You conceive that patriotism is an honourable excuse for every thing; but I understand and feel as well as you this noble sentiment, and I have always found, that, in its purity, it was more nearly allied than any other to justice and generosity.

And you, Legislators, who have thrown down without distinction both the ancient pillars of social order and the safeguards of public security, and who have substituted instead of them a system of your own invention, an organization of your own choice, it is you who ought to shed tears when the laws without efficacy, and authority without force, are unable to defend justice and give protection to the man oppressed. It is you who ought to weep when you see the people misled, when you see the fruits of the new education that is given them, when you see the consequences of those detestable publications which are a perpetual reproach to your liberty of the press; for you will one day find that the infant that drew its first nourishment from the milk of a wolf is no longer capable of being humanized. It is you also who should put on mourning for every victim that, in
the

the reign of your omnipotence, perishes unprotected by the law ; a single drop of blood which the wife of Macbeth could not efface, prevented her from enjoying the gratifications and splendid luxuries of the throne. How is it possible to escape the most poignant affliction, in looking at the sad and calamitous spectacle which France every day exhibits ! the public squares and private habitations polluted with the blood of victims shed by a people who are become the sport of every passion ; the prisons filled by the mysterious decisions of police and inquisition committees ; a numerous class of citizens reduced to despair, and flying from the blind fury of some and the distrust of others ; foreigners terrified, and deserting as a savage land a kingdom favoured with the choicest gifts of nature ; moderate and peaceable citizens anxious only to keep themselves in retirement and obscurity ; consciences alarmed and schism ready to spring up ; a multitude of artisans who carry their talents into other countries, and a much greater multitude fixed to the place of their birth, who demand from the state those means of existence which the ordinary interchange of wealth and commodities no longer affords

them. Alas! at the aspect of so many misfortunes, how can we persuade ourselves that the political institutions of the legislator are faultless! How can we suppose that a liberty of which the monarch laid the foundation, that a benefit received from him, should require for its security so wide a desolation, and so general a distress!

Let men whose minds are abstracted, and whose feelings are callous, look with unconcern on all the evils to which they are witnesses, by attending to the more calamitous story of every revolution recorded in history; it is doubtless an inexhaustible source of consolation. They will find merciless calculators, who, after having drawn up a list of all the crimes that have been committed, after having computed the number of heads borne in triumph on the points of pikes and lances, and added them together, will demonstrate from the whole, that the present revolution is stained with fewer violences and less blood than that of any former period. I will not follow them in these dreadful comparisons; but I will ask, whether they have forgotten that an age of light and knowledge differs totally from preceding ages of ignorance; that

that it is this illumination which has procured us liberty, and that we are the more inexcusable for remaining barbarous in our manners and sentiments? I will ask in particular, supposing them to have taken their examples from modern history, where is that Philip whose sanguinary reign excited against him universal disgust? Where is the Duke of Alva, the minister of his tyrannical will, who was desirous of subjecting the Flemings to the horrors of the inquisition, and who, with the most imperious severity, made them feel all the bonds of servitude, and all the disgraces of slavery? I will farther ask where is now that Albert of Austria, whose ambitious mind and ferocious character had made Switzerland desolate, and who, wishing to bring the proud inhabitants of this country of agriculture under a new yoke, led them to despair by the most refined inventions of his remorseless cruelty? Yes, I will ask these calculators, where the tyrant is now to be found whose enormities can be an excuse for severities of any kind? I look for such a character, and I see only a prince who is an affecting example of the most consummate goodness; a prince whose pure manners and retired life are a
model

model for the conduct of a private individual; a prince who always resisted violent counsels, and seemed cordially to assent to no projects but such as were distinguished for beneficence. I see a prince taught by experience how insufficient is his own power, or that of any single man, to promote equally to his wishes the happiness of his people. Convinced of this truth, I see him calling to his aid the representatives of the nation; I see him robbing himself of a part of his authority, that he may with his paternal hands lay the foundation of the edifice of liberty; and the day of the opening of the States General, I see him on his throne in the midst of the deputies of the nation, adopting no other title, giving himself no other appellation than that of *the first friend of his people*.

Such was the language of his majesty, or rather such were his virtues, and such his benefits, the faithful image of those virtues. We forget however his gifts, to talk only of conquest; we forget the great things he did in his freedom, that we may keep him in dependence; we proclaim the sacrifices to which he consented in the days of his power, to demand of him new sacrifices in his present state
of

of imbecility; in short, and this hypocritical policy on the part of an honest and generous nation is more painful to me than any other circumstance, we know that he lives in continual alarm, that he is alarmed for himself, that he is alarmed for a wife whom he loves, and who in her attachment to him has evinced the noblest courage, and the most sympathetic interest in all the events of his life; we know that such is his situation, and yet we consider his assent to all the laws which are imposed on him, as the exact representation of his sentiments and opinions.

What a return for so much confidence, and such various sacrifices! Is then generosity, the fairest of virtues, rejected also; a virtue that best reminds us of the former character of the French, and which foreigners expected would be the first displayed by the National Assembly, whom they were disposed to honour as the image of the nation?

What in like manner are we to think of those phrases so frequently employed in the assembly when speaking of the king—"The benefits of the nation are showered upon him in sufficient abundance"—"He costs enough"—"He is sufficiently paid."—This language
would

would be cruel, unjust and unbecoming, even if the family of the sovereign had had no direct and proper patrimony. It is not the expences necessarily annexed to the splendour of the throne, that can be supposed to compose the happiness of a prince whose opinions are sober, whose manners simple, and whose desires moderate. But the reproach is altogether incomprehensible, in a case in which the annual revenues assigned to the monarch are perhaps barely equivalent to the revenue of his own estate. We are told indeed that, by the laws of the state, sovereigns have nothing peculiarly their own, their domains being fully and irrevocably united to the crown. But I cannot find that any one has made the most important deduction from such a principle. What was the intention of this legislative determination? To hinder the monarch from being distracted by opposite interests; to hinder him from employing the prerogatives he possessed, for the purpose of increasing his private fortune at the expence of the public. At a time then when the constitution is changed, when the public revenues are no longer intrusted to the sovereign, it would be subversive of every principle of justice to argue upon
the

the postulata of an exploded system; or at least it would be necessary to suppose that a prince destined to the government of an empire is obliged, like a farmer-general, to advance a certain sum as a security for the trust reposed in him. But upon that supposition he ought not to be placed in a condition worse than the farmer, by making the sum he has advanced the irredeemable and irrevocable property of the nation.

These reasonings appear to me unanswerable, and the more so as, if you sum up the original property of the present royal family, and the property they have acquired by marriages and inheritance, if you take into the account those parts of their domain which have been surrendered in lieu of the produce of certain taxes, or granted not so much from the liberality of the king, as in recompense of services done to the state, you will find perhaps that the claims of the prince upon the throne do not fall short of the amount of the civil list. The king however has never alleged these personal demands. In public he has appeared the monarch, and it is in the sorrows of the heart only that he has been a private man. Those sorrows are unquestionably great;
and

and if at any time they cease to be present to his recollection, it is only so far as he is called off from his habitual afflictions by calamities of a deeper dye, by scenes of iniquity and horror, and the deliberate murder of citizens of the state; it is when he learns those detested violences which have fixed an indelible blot upon the national character; it is when he hears that a people, formerly compassionate and kind, have been converted into an instrument of vengeance and alarm.

I must explain myself with frankness, it is a part of my character, and a sentiment which I cannot dispense with. I am aware that it is an unpardonable offence, to censure in the slightest degree the declaration of rights, a work that has cost so much pains and study: but I was ever apprehensive that it would mislead the minds of the people, and this was one of the reasons which influenced the opinion of the king and his council when the declaration was presented for his majesty's acceptance. I shall quote his words; they are to be found at the conclusion of his reply to the Assembly, on their decree relative to the fundamental laws of the constitution.

“ I shall not give my sentiments at large
“ respect-

“ respecting your declaration of the rights of
“ man and a citizen. It contains some very
“ excellent maxims, proper to guide you in
“ your deliberations : but principles vague in
“ their application, and susceptible of various
“ interpretations, cannot easily be appreciated,
“ nor is it necessary till their sense be ac-
“ curately fixed by the laws to which they
“ are to serve as the basis.”

The Assembly were resolved to obtain the king's assent to this declaration, and they sent their president a second time for this purpose on the evening of the 5th of October. The Parisian troops were at this moment at the gates of Versailles, and the courts and avenues of the palace were filled by a crowd of people that had arrived before them. It was necessary to comply ; but posterity will never forget the period that was chosen for consecrating the theory of the rights of man, and for laying the corner stone of the edifice of liberty.

The first axiom in the declaration of rights has been the source of a multitude of disorders. It is become a proverb with the lowest class of society ; and a legislative proverb has greater force than any other. When misunderstood,

3

there

there is reason to fear that the people will long be led astray by it.

“ *Men are born and continue free and equal in their rights.*” Such is the axiom so highly extolled and capable of so many interpretations.

That men are equal in their rights is an undoubted truth, if we speak only of their claim to the protection of the laws, and to all the advantages of society which the laws of property leave to the community. In that case we do not go far enough; something more than justice is requisite towards a numerous class of citizens, who, having no other means of subsistence than their labour, are frequently exposed to all the hazards of so precarious a resource. They have a right to the cares of beneficence, and it is incumbent on the legislators to temper the rigour of the laws of property by such regulations as sound policy and social virtue shall dictate. But these expressions, *Men are born and continue free and equal in their rights*, simple as they appear, may be differently understood, and easily become dangerous. In a legislative creed nothing should be sanctioned but principles of complete and undisputed truth, and the maxim
in

in question is not of that character. It is no difficult task to point out a variety of senses in which it will admit of contradiction.

It may be said men are not *born free*, since the preservation of their lives, their acquisition of strength and health, and the apprenticeship they serve to common sense, that faculty by which they must learn to govern themselves, are all the indispensable fruit of their dependence.

Men do not *continue free*, since when they emancipate from the authority of their parents, they pass under the empire of the laws, which were made without their participation, and before they came into being.

Men are not *born equal in their rights*, since they come into the world with distinct claims, and these claims are the degrees of strength, of intellect and capacity with which they are variously endowed. Each has his part assigned him, each has his determined situation in the immense scale of moral and physical existencies; and it is by a kind of patent sealed with the great seal of nature that he issues from the shades of nonentity. Men are no otherwise equal in their rights than as they desire and are capable of happiness; but undoubtedly

this source of equality cannot pretend to have much stress laid upon it, as none of our reformers have ever yet undertaken to defend the rights of brutes, who nevertheless, like ourselves have all of them the desire and capacity of happiness.

It is still less true that men *continue equal in their rights*, since the laws of property are the first they meet with the moment they are desirous of making use of their faculties; and these laws are so imperious, that we see some condemned to perpetual labour, and others living in idleness; some deprived of all share in the agreeable dispensations of fortune, and others enjoying all its sweets and luxuries.

In fine, equality of rights can with difficulty be reconciled with the sacred duties of gratitude; for these duties would no longer exist if the individual rights of the benefactor were not acknowledged. Inequality of duties, like inequality of rights, is the bond of society and the habitual condition of human life. It is by them that the necessary relations are maintained which subsist between parents and children, between preceptors and pupils, between masters and servants, between old persons and young. This continual succession
of

of rights and duties constitutes our moral system. Men are not like animals, whose life purely sensual has its intervals of leisure occupied by sleep : they have a long space to go over in the midst of agitations of mind, in the midst of hopes and fears, and the different prospects which the imagination presents to them. In this situation they have need of some support; and they are duties and rights which fix their tottering steps, and guide them in the dubious path. By giving to one strength, to another beauty, to a third understanding and genius, nature, as I before observed, has invested them from their birth with different rights and claims, and education by perfecting these advantages has made the original distinctions still more perceptible. The stream of happiness is certainly not polluted by them, and our most delicious sensations are probably derived from the rights we acknowledge, or those which we resign. In short, it is evidently the union of our rights and duties which forms our mutual relations, softens the asperity and smooths the ruggedness of our characters, and fits us for the enjoyments of society. This union is perhaps the most beautiful idea in the moral system, and

it reminds us at the same time of the arrangement of the physical world, where all is relation and there is no equality.

The National Assembly persuades itself, that in all moral and political questions it has raised its conceptions to the highest pinnacle of abstraction. I should think it no very difficult undertaking to prove that there are yet other regions beyond the columns of this new Hercules. They think themselves at the top of the mountain because they are come to the clouds ; but it will sometimes happen that these clouds stop short by one half of the summit.

But I quit these reflections, for it is not metaphysics that I wish to discuss ; and it would be of little importance whether the National Assembly had committed an error in one of its axioms, if these axioms had not been presented to the people in the form of laws, and had not by that means become dangerous.

After having declared that *men are born and continue equal in their rights*, the Assembly informs us in a subsequent article, that property ought to be included in the number of the *natural and imprescriptible rights of man*. The people perfectly understand the first axiom, and interest

terest induces them to treasure it in the memory ; but will they be equally mindful of the exception or commentary ? Beside, we can easily prove to them in this age of philosophy, that property is not a *natural* right, but a right established by society ; and they will be the less disposed to consider it as an *imprescriptible* right, since the National Assembly has in some instances invaded it. A singular contradiction of a different kind has also been given by the Assembly to the absolute principle of equality of rights ; and that is the distinction it has established between active and non-active citizens, and the obligation it has imposed of a certain portion of property in order to be admitted to a participation of the chief political advantages.

In the same article which places property in the rank of natural and imprescriptible rights, *resistance to oppression* is likewise included. But in the eyes of the poor, true oppression proceeds from inequality of wealth : how easily therefore may they be misled by attending to the declaration of rights ! It is also extremely dangerous to authorise in a general manner resistance to oppression, as the word oppression is lax in its meaning, and by not

being defined, every one will think himself entitled to judge of the moment when he may rise up against authority. The laws even may appear to be oppressive ; and if men once come to regard in that light those which deprive the majority of citizens of their natural equality, their consequent fortune and their independence, to what lengths may not the principle, vaguely consecrated in the declaration of rights, lead !

First ideas and general principles are doubtless of considerable value to the legislator ; but they are not calculated for the people till they have been reduced to the precision of law. They are like those rich metals which are still in the mines, and which are not brought into circulation till they have been converted by the sovereign into a coin whose standard and weight have been exactly ascertained.

I ought to present another reflection to the metaphysical philosophy of the National Assembly. The farther a principle is from the deductions that may be inferred from it, the more simple it doubtless is to a thinking mind ; but as the principle is in this case at so much the greater distance from the true end to which
it

it should conduct us, no guide is more likely to mislead men of ordinary capacities, and who are not in the habit of reflection. Such however form the majority of a nation ; they have no time for the improvement of their minds, since, being destitute of property and inheritance, they are under the necessity of devoting the first moments of their physical strength to procure themselves wages, and of labouring all their lives for their subsistence. It is not to men of this description that general principles are adapted ; and it is unwise to address to them any maxims that are capable of extension or diminution. Laws they must have, but those laws should be equally clear and positive.

It will perhaps be said that we do not now address instructions to the people to teach them how to obey, but how to command. But by what contrariety, when we wish to place the sceptre of nations in their hands, have we recourse to the elements of metaphysics as their guide ? Beside, in government there is nothing of less general utility than a general maxim ; such maxims will only furnish ideas vague and indistinct, and will not to the mass of mankind communicate any thing accurate, intelligible and precise.

The legislators of France bear a striking resemblance to the theoretical Economists. Like them they wish to govern the world by reasonings, and like them they form societies, in which, from good motives I have no doubt, the people are invited to receive lessons of national policy. I shall repeat here what I have frequently said in my different works, as to the impossibility that the mass of this people should find sufficient time for instruction. They have not even enough to study morality ; and, but for the rapid ascendancy of religious ideas, their attachment to the observance of order would be very inconsiderable. If we are really desirous of making them more enlightened, let us examine whether we can pay them for their leisure from the public treasury, or prevail on proprietors to double their wages. Nature gives to every man the faculty of perfecting himself ; but this faculty requires the aid of education ; this education demands time, and the allotment of this time is incompatible with the obligation of employing the first moments of strength to obtain subsistence by labour. All these ideas are closely connected : till therefore the laws of property are changed, till we are willing or able to effect such a change, the instruction of the people must

must be proportioned to the immutable conditions of their destiny; and when from time to time we wish to fix before their eyes a general principle, the explication and limits of which they are incapable of comprehending, we place them in the situation of men born blind, from whom we have just removed a cataract, and who at first see mountains reversed, the base where the summit should be, and who can also form no just idea of distance.

I know not what prodigies may one day be wrought by our political oculists; but let us not in the mean time totally forget that, according to old ideas, government is the debt of knowledge to ignorance, as beneficence is the debt of wealth to poverty.

I will pursue this discussion no farther; it is sufficient that I have shown by a few observations that the king had reasonable or at least considerate motives for refusing to admit the declaration of rights as constitutional laws.

I say nothing respecting the general plan and design of the performance; but I have always been of opinion that the edifice of the constitution merited a more majestic and venerable portico. I could at least have wished
that

that the Assembly had taken for their model the American declaration of rights, and had preserved that admirable principle contained in

“ *Article XVII.* No people can preserve a
“ free and happy government, without being
“ firmly and constantly attached to the laws of
“ justice, moderation, œconomy, temperance
“ and virtue, and without frequently recurring
“ to these fundamental principles.”

Yes, every thing is comprised in these memorable words, the duties of the people and those of the legislator. This is what he ought to have present to his thoughts; this is what he should repeat to us again and again. *Justice, moderation, virtue,* are indeed the necessary principles to render a government free and happy; and to the neglect of this useful and general truth all our regrets and reproaches may be imputed. It ought to have been written on the walls of the hall in which the deputies of France met together. It would have served as a continual admonition, and a salutary lesson; and they might at least by means of it have properly understood, justly interpreted, and accurately circumscribed the first maxim of their declaration of rights. The words equality and liberty are beautiful every
where;

where; and there is no philosopher, no writer who has not employed them with success: but the just measure of the ideas represented by those words, their exact application and relative fitness to the circumstances of a country and the character of its inhabitants, their accurate adjustment to the weaknesses and passions inherent in human nature, and above all their alliance with the principles of virtue and morality, constitute the chief difficulty, and when surmounted the most indelible glory of a legislator. If we would push all our ideas to an extremity, we have only to yield ourselves to the current; and in youth this is always the disposition which the mind originally takes; but the power of stopping ourselves in our course is the rarest and most laborious of all attainments, and is the attribute only of mature judgment. Time is in this case the sovereign preceptor, and nothing is necessary but that we should resign ourselves to its guidance. It may infallibly be depended upon to rectify the errors of rashness and inexperience; but in the mean time woe to the generation that shall serve as a subject upon which for rashness and inexperience to make their absurd and ill-judged experiment!

✓ It is particularly in their systems of equality that the National Assembly have in my opinion gone into extremes. Finding that the inequalities of property, that great source of jealousy, could not be attacked, they have applied their levelling instruments to honorary distinctions. Experience will teach us whether those familiar abbreviations, M. Condé, M. Conti, M. Capet, those new appellations, and quaker forms, consecrated by the mandates of the National Assembly, will be equally sanctioned by the edicts of time. Experience will teach us whether eight or nine hundred years of illustrious ancestry, the inheritance of the house of Montmorenci and many other families, is to be for ever changed into abstractions, and no longer have any distinctive sign to point it out. Experience will teach us if these petty jealousies, these philosophic puerilities are to be adopted by posterity, and if it be worth while to offend so great a part of the nation by the establishment of a doctrine equally indifferent both to liberty and happiness.

I may be deceived, but it appears to me that the genius of the English has shewn itself superior to ours in their system of equality.

Events

Events have doubtless led them to their object ; but this is a distinction which I shall not stop to enquire into. Leaving then to the English legislators all the honour of this system, I perceive that they have perfectly filled up the moral and political views of which so great a question presents the outlines. They have felt that the monarch, the depositary of the executive power, and an essential branch of the legislature, would be too feeble and too isolated, if he were not surrounded with characters of a nature in some degree congenial with his own, if he were unsupported by a political corps separate and distinct from the mass of citizens, and who should seem to be the prop and the ornament of the majesty of the throne. These old philosophers in politics and morality have also felt that, neither in a morning nor an evening sitting, were opinions to be overturned that had grown up with ages, and had determined the respect paid by every nation to such races of men as were distinguished by important services to the state.

In the mean time, influenced by great principles, the English have not thought proper to license the indefinite extension of honorary appellations, and still less their dissemination .
by

by all the divisions and subdivisions of titles formerly observed in France, and which introduced into society and into affairs a multitude of petty superiorities, the sources of so many vain pretensions.

From these different considerations the English have given general satisfaction to the nation at large by uniting honorary distinctions into a single house of peers consisting of between two and three hundred persons. These distinctions are hereditary, but they procure during the life of the father no prerogative or title to his children,* who differ in no respect from the rest of the citizens, but, in competition with them, solicit from the people the honourable function of representatives in the house of commons. As this second division of the parliament is infinitely superior to the first in credit and stability, and persons are admitted without respect of name or birth, real equality seems to be perfectly established. English pride, that pride more national and more patriotic than our metaphysical vanities, takes no offence at the existence of two or three hundred hereditary peers, destined, not to re-

* The elder sons of the first peers only have the title of lords by courtesy.

present any particular class of citizens, but to support the royal prerogative and give lustre to the majesty of the throne, to imprint on the national laws a more elevated character, and to defend constitutional liberty against the attempts of government, against the errors of the people, and in case of necessity against the variable opinions of a representative body whose functions are temporary. The English nation may perhaps be mistaken; but it has conceived that the happiness and fate of the country would be safer when not merely confided to superintendants of its own choice, but to other guardians also whose attachment to the constitution and the prosperity of the state should be secured by an hereditary interest.

If we descend to considerations of less moment, and examine the calculations of vanity and self-love, we shall perceive that the house of peers, the members of which are titled, increases the lustre of that which is associated with it: it constitutes, if I may so say, the insignia of honour, the ribbon of the whole nation. Respect is always founded on some point of comparison; and perhaps we should
be

be mistaken in supposing, that the deference paid to a simple citizen of England out of his country depends solely on his quality of being a free man : without reflecting on it, we consider him as an individual on a level with the peers of the realm, who again are equal to persons of highest rank in Europe ; and we may doubt whether this Englishman, obscure in appearance, may not himself attain the same distinction.

✓ A citizen of France, according to the new constitution, will by no means be considered in the same point of view ; for he will appear only as a part of a vast monotonous whole, destitute of all those prominences which strike the imagination. Thus, if we confine ourselves to the estimations of pure vanity, the commons of France would have gained more had they admitted some modification of their system, which destroys every kind of distinction.

✓ It is remarkable that the English, to establish an equality among them, have raised the greater part of the nation and placed it on a level with the less : the French, to attain the same end, have sunk the less to a level with the greater. Thus England has effected her purpose

purpose by the elevation, France by the degradation of a part. The difference is important both to external consideration and internal happiness.

To despise these reflections as transient, would be wrong : the most subtle ideas serve as the elements of opinion, and imperceptibly modify it. Thus in large societies these ideas frequently acquire the greatest sway when they are most refined : from their very subtility they elude the grasp of argument, and the trammels of ratiocination. One might say, that, reduced to a sort of atmosphere, they acted on opinion as the air on physical substances, not by any visible power, but by continuity and insensible penetration.

Civil and political liberty, and an equality of happiness, are the points at which we should aim. But to form a tyrannical system of strict equality of rank, to persecute the most trifling distinctions with that spirit of despotism which led Tarquin to cut off the head of every poppy that rose a little above the rest, is to have a very narrow philosophy, or a very extensive notion of vanity in general. There is more weakness in dreading every kind of conventional superiority, than in

compliantly enjoying such advantages. Beside, this is not the cause of the people. To hold out to it a contrary language is to deceive it. Vanity is a sentiment, the action of which is necessarily limited: it may exist between the different ranks of society, which, from their approximation, may look up to one another; but from the lowest classes to the highest rank this vanity never existed. The differences of fortune and education separate men in a far more striking manner, and will ever continue so to separate them, since these distinctions, of all the greatest, are in the inevitable order of things.

Neither is it an indifferent resolution when we take upon us to destroy the habitude and duty of respect; for we at the same time effect a change of manners: and a nation perhaps, which, with this light rein, would have appeared gentle and humane, will become rude and savage the instant it is totally emancipated from it.

It is also a singular scheme, to seek to combine, with the depravity of the present times and the corruption of an ancient monarchy, proscriptions of names, retrenchments of titles, and all those austere forms which accord only
3 with

with the simplicity of manners of some petty republic, or the severe principles of some rigid sect. Our nature is not to be changed by force ; and before we are equalized by a compulsory law, we should be brought together by moral sentiment, the sole tie that can be of any duration.

They say, and here the wit lends its assistance to the desire they have of dissembling their secret sentiments, that they have destroyed hereditary nobility, to prevent those distinctions from bringing back to us at some future period real privileges : but if we are in dread of pretensions, we should not add to their force by compressing them. Beside, will the practice of society be prevented from preserving a tradition, of which we may try in vain to interrupt the course ? and will not the word *formerly*, which cannot be proscribed, preserve on public deeds the type of what men were ? But in the incorporeal essence of nobility, what a man was, will ever continue to mark what he is ; for things founded in opinion are alone independent of the strongest empire : in vain will men seek to govern the imagination in the name of the law ; of all our moral senses it is the most

rebellious, and in such an attempt success is impossible.

Beside, was there ever a circumstance under which conventional superiority had less power to wound invidious vanity than an epoch so glorious for all the French as the present, an epoch when under a free constitution genius, talents and virtue resume their station, and can so easily efface every other distinction? This is undoubtedly the only true manner of lessening the importance of rank and title, while that which has been chosen announces a weakness of mind unworthy of being associated with the noble and generous sentiments of liberty.

The suppression of hereditary distinctions is also the least of all steps towards equality. To establish in reality that levelling system of which some are so jealous, men should be assimilated to each other not only by fortune, but also by education, by that cultivation of mind the diversity of which establishes differences of esteem far greater than those of name. All men are equal, all men are brothers: true, but in this relationship there are elder brothers better treated than those of Normandy. Before we were all placed on the same line,
an

an equal fortune should have been given to all; and on one should have been bestowed revenues, on another knowledge, on a third moral qualities, with an infinite number of other advantages of which the greater part of mankind is unhappily destitute. But we have been obliged to redeem, by the inequalities which are the result of differences of property, those still greater inequalities which we should have experienced in a state of nature. Justice, and the confederacy formed to consecrate and defend it, have delivered the weak from the oppressive yoke of force and violence : we must receive them therefore with all their consequences, and not separate in idea the effects of a principle from the principle itself. Let us consider ourselves such as we are; let us consider ourselves in a state of society, the basis of which is the maintenance of the rights of every one; and let us not, by inconsiderately re-establishing the empire of a blind force, recal those primitive relations which introduced among men a kind of superiority far more dreadful and tyrannical than all those phantoms of the imagination against which we are now in arms.

What if, after having annihilated all rank,

we should remain equal in power and credit ! But we shall have our great men, and our great men to be dreaded : we shall have our peers of the realm ; and they will be the most dangerous amongst us ; they who desire that every thing should be put into the hands of the people, to move them afterwards at their pleasure, to make themselves masters of them, and rule them by their unworthy writings ; then to make of them the instruments of their jealousy, the instruments of their hatred, the instruments of their despotic opinions ; in their name to give laws to the legislators themselves ; and to be the lords and masters of us all. Ah ! what a change ! what a superiority ! Of all others it is the most to be dreaded.

In fine, and it is my last remark, before giving ourselves up without remorse to the attractions of a novel system of equality, all with one accord should have consented to it ; we should have arrived together in a colony with the same titles, and maintained that parity under the respectable sanction of a general compact : but to establish our equalization by the laws of force and constraint, to establish it by a sacrifice in which they who
impose

impose it have no part, shews no respect to the laws of property, or the sacred maxims of justice.

Still less does this respect appear, if we fix our attention on a striking circumstance. On the one hand, a great power is put into the hands of the people ; on the other, the leaders of the commons are put in possession of every place that can warrant them the respect of the multitude : they are made judges, municipal officers, administrators of departments and districts, and soon they will become bishops. There was one class of citizens alone who were protected by the regard paid them on account of their ancient honorary titles, and the patronage attached to their territorial possessions : of these they are despoiled, and thus they come in for no share. With them, therefore, it is not equality that is in fact established, but the greatest disparity.

Let them beware ; the distance is very small between the principle which, for the sake of gratifying the vanity of the many, takes away from the few certain honorary prerogatives consecrated by the practice of ages, and the principle which, for the sake of

gratifying the wants of the many, should authorise the reduction of overgrown property. Individual property is in most instances less sanctified by prescription than titles and family distinctions; and therefore ought not to hope successfully to escape the inferences that will be drawn from general systems of equality. The arguments will be found ready prepared in the harangues of the Gracchi; and nothing can be requisite to their success but the union of a set of representatives as little accustomed to the conveniences of property, as is the greater part of the present assembly to pre-eminence of birth.

We are ignorant beforehand where a first step may lead; we are ignorant what principles may be grafted on ours by the persons who shall come after us. Having once violated the temple of justice and destroyed its gates, others will be guilty of greater excesses, and we shall be accomplices in their worst profanations.

I could never accuse myself of having neglected for a moment the guard of this temple, or deserted my honourable post. It has been seen how, at the opening of the States General, I defended the rights of the creditors of
the

the state; how at a subsequent period I exposed myself to considerable disgrace, rather than dissemble my sentiments respecting the rigorous and vain proscription of hereditary distinctions; how I urged the necessity of indemnifying or making some compensation to those who had been reduced to the most painful distress by the abolition of pecuniary rights attached from time immemorial to a certain description of property. It may have been seen in like manner how I undertook the cause of those whose houses were set on fire and their possessions laid waste, in consequence of the total neglect of public order. I one day thus addressed the Assembly upon this subject—"It is a debt which I have not been
"able to bring to account, but it is worthy
"the notice of a great nation. Many citizens have incurred considerable losses; their
"habitations have been burned down, and
"their property plundered. The tutelary
"authority of the laws would have protected
"them from these outrages, if it had not
"been destitute of power: yet this protection
"is what every citizen expects when he
"brings annually a certain share of his fortune to the national treasury. Does it not
"appear

“ appear to you just that the departments
“ should make a calculation of these losses,
“ and that an indemnification, not rigorously
“ exact, but prudent and equitable, should be
“ considered as a debt of the nation to be
“ liquidated at least in happier days, if not
“ at present? It is at the request of the king
“ that I submit this idea to your considera-
“ tion; it does honour to his benevolent
“ heart, and is worthy the supreme head of
“ the nation of which you are the representa-
“ tives.”

The Assembly having in one of its memoirs bestowed some applause on this part of my discourse, I flattered myself that I had successfully disposed them to this act of justice; and I delayed not to place the subject before them in a more formal manner, by recommending, in my report on the finances of 29 May 1790, “ that a loan of sixty mil-
“ lions at five per cent. should be appro-
“ priated to the mitigation of the losses occa-
“ sioned by the severity of their decrees and
“ the excesses committed in the provinces.”

These were not the only principles of justice which I endeavoured to impress on the minds of the National Assembly; I took the liberty

liberty of recommending others of the same mild and equitable nature; and I thus expressed myself in a memoir which I read to the Assembly on the evening preceding the day when the salaries of the clergy were to be the subject of discussion :

“ I have always conceived that, by a spirit
“ of conciliation, by temporary indemnifica-
“ tions, temporary from necessity, and by that
“ tenderness and respect which are due to
“ those from whom we demand very consi-
“ derable sacrifices, we may soften the bitter-
“ ness of their grief. What have they not a
“ right to expect from the generosity of men
“ who, by a course of events, are become the
“ most powerful as well as the most happy !
“ It is an error to suppose that individual pri-
“ vations, extorted without measure and with-
“ out proportion, must be equally beneficial
“ to public interest. There is in the nature
“ of all social compacts a tribute of confidence
“ and mutual kindness, as necessary to their
“ success as any other species of contribution.
“ Have no apprehension that future genera-
“ tions will reproach you for the lenity you
“ shall shew to such of your fellow-citizens as
“ you detach by violence from their past situ-
“ ations.

“ations. These generations will inherit a
“sufficient portion of the fruits of your la-
“bours: be careful only to secure the perpe-
“tuity of them; be careful that they descend
“to posterity without having cost too many
“tears, and as the offspring of a revolution
“tranquil and beneficent.”

It seems to me also that in applying to the demands of the state the revenues of so many donations made to the church by the ancient nobility of France, a small portion might have been selected in order to heal the wounds inflicted on their descendants. But the utmost indifference has been shown for their losses, and we turn away our eyes from the despair to which a numerous class of citizens have been reduced, whose names have for so many ages been distinguished in the fasti of monarchy. Such a mode of proceeding is indeed severe. Their fortune, their rank, their personal tranquillity, all the conditions of their social existence have been invaded and persecuted with a rigour that is unexampled. One might have supposed that they had not been, like the rest of the inhabitants, children of the country. No sentiment of mildness or generosity has illustrated the character of those
who

who were in possession of power. Why did they not in reality acquire liberty by conquest as they wish to persuade us? They would then perhaps have had the magnanimity that usually accompanies victory; but by abusing their advantages, by demanding sacrifices of others, never of themselves, by hearing without emotion the complaints of the oppressed, they have polluted that liberty which was committed to them pure and un sullied, and which came forth from the throne accompanied with peace and justice. Alas! it was in the midst of universal felicity that they ought to have received it with its noble retinue, and all the virtues should have crowded around it.

In short, as if so much severity and so many hardships were not sufficient, they now attempt to trouble the consciences of men by having recourse to oaths; oaths which are always placed by the side of danger, and in the midst of terrors and sacrifices. Here also it is the safety of others they endanger, while they live tranquilly themselves, impregnable in their own strength and supreme authority. I will not listen to the whispers of calumny, or entertain a doubt of the religious spirit of the National Assembly. We never ask succour

cour but of our friends ; and the Assembly therefore would not basely call to their aid the religion of an oath, if they did not possess in their hearts the principles which render such an obligation sacred. I beg leave however to make one observation : when they continually associate the God of the universe in their cause, when they require him as the security of the promises that are exacted, they ought to present to him the homage of goodness, justice, compassion and lenity, the virtues which he demands of us, the virtues which he loves, and of which the relations he generously sustains towards us are the bright example and glorious testimony.

How omnipotent is morality, and how presumptuous are we when we suppose the understanding to be a more infallible guide ! Men in the midst of their passions, legislators in the midst of their arduous occupations, innovators in the midst of their fervid ideas, must all resort to the standard of this great principle, if they would not fall into continual deviations and errors. Morality, as I have frequently observed in my works, is the wisdom of ages. They who consult and respect it, are placed round a light-house the
brilliant

brilliant flame of which is never extinguished; and guided by this light they are sure to find their way through the labyrinth of affairs, and through all the various interests which thwart and clash with each other.

It would be no difficult undertaking to apply these reflections to the National Assembly, and shew that, by a more inflexible morality, they might have avoided their principal mistakes. It is by the licentiousness of their principles that they have extricated themselves from a multitude of embarrassments, into which they would never have fallen had morality been their guide. Meanwhile the morality of legislators is the least restrained of any, because in an infinite number of civil arrangements they are placed above the sphere of ordinary rules; but they are not placed above justice, above gratitude, above generosity towards the weak, above the duties which a confidence in their integrity demands, above the love of order, above a sacred respect for the lives and safety of men, and in short above numberless other primitive virtues.

How much higher would have been the character of the Assembly, if reflecting on these considerations, and by them regulating their

their conduct, they had demanded respect by the firmness of their measures, and the dignity of their principles! They would then no longer have been obliged continually to do homage at the shrine of opinion, and to keep their minds perpetually upon the stretch the more easily to ascertain this opinion, and, getting as it were the start of it, to ordain with pompous affectation what is thus tyrannically dictated. The Assembly might then without servility have obtained the public approbation. They would have appeared to sit under the shade of justice and reason, and to be canopied with that sacred oak whose roots seem to penetrate to the centre, and whose branches are fed with the dew of heaven. Their decisions, always in conformity to the principles of morals, would have been listened to as if they had been the words of immortal life, and never would they have been driven to court a thousand allies unworthy of their friendship, and of the business in which they were engaged.

I feel myself compelled in this place to call the attention of the reader for a moment to myself. I understand the censure that is
passed

passed upon me : my attachment to the principles of justice they condemn as obstinacy and prejudice ; and, the more effectually to explode it, distinguish it by the appellation of *aristocratical weakness*. I know too well what weakness is most congenial to my heart. People of France, it was your interest that first inspired me with sentiments of tenderness ; it was for you that I fought my earliest battles : but you were then disunited and impotent, and while I deplored the unfeeling manner in which you were treated, while I urged the forbearance that was due to you, while I was perpetually disquieted for your fate, then, as now, men endeavoured by nicknames and ridiculous epithets to silence my expostulations. Now you have abandoned me, I would willingly seek some other object of attachment ; but it is beyond my power ; I have not even this poor consolation. Your enemies and mine have raised a barrier against me that I shall never seek to pass. They will not fail to entertain against me inexpiable hatred, since the faults which they have committed they charge upon me. And was it I that inspired them with insolence and caprice in the hour of their prosperity ?

X

city? Was it I that taught them stubbornness and inflexibility at a time when compliance and moderation appeared indispensable? No; if they were not now overwhelmed with misfortune, if they were not persecuted and oppressed, I should have a thousand reproaches to address to them. I trust therefore that when at length I have again undertaken to assert their rights and their property, they will not imagine that I have entertained for a moment the project of recovering their favour. I have no need of them, I have no need of any one. My future companion, that shall cheer my life and console my death, shall be memory alone. When I recollect the purity of the principles that have actuated me, I find no where an alliance suitable to my claims. Meanwhile the instinct of man leads him to society, and, urged by this instinct, I associate myself in imagination with the honest of every different climate, with the honourable few whose ruling passion is the love of virtue; I ask no tenderness but theirs, I seek no union but with men thus estimably distinguished.

I return from this digression. It was also
in

in the name of the laws of morality that I so frequently called the attention of the Assembly to the melancholy consequences of the inconsiderate liberty of the press, and reminded them of the danger of those public manufactories of imposture and calumny, those forges of darkness where so many incendiary publications are daily fabricated. Establishments like these would more aptly be founded on the sombre banks of the Acheron, or in the court of the palace of the Furies, than in the midst of a country where the purity of the atmosphere and the aspect of a serene sky form a contrast with such devouring poisons, such infernal flames, as are every where scattered, and which cover the face of the country. They are abuses, it is said, which the defence and support of freedom render necessary, and those who love freedom ought to tolerate them. Yes; they are such abuses as assassination, false witness, the public cry of sedition, and a number of other crimes. Ah! render a purer homage to freedom, do more justice to the constitution that secures it, and you will no longer perceive the necessity of so corrupt a support. And is it then so difficult to love liberty, which makes us happy in

so many ways? Or does it appear more attractive when it has for its satellites men who seem to walk in its train that they might surrender themselves with less restraint to the violence of their passions, men nourished in hatred, and the very sound of whose voice fills every heart with terror? Regardless of public tranquillity, and skilful in exciting commotions, they are impatient to know all the mischief they can do, and to get rid of their remorse they hasten, with the torch of discord in their hands, to enjoy the spectacle of their infamous success. Consummate also in the perfidious art of mangling reputations, they make a pastime of this abominable practice, and it is difficult to say which pleases them most, the annihilation of every sentiment of esteem, or the subversion of all kinds of authority; for they wish anarchy to reign in our hearts, as well as in the bosom of our political societies. We should despise these men, it is said. This is an easy sentiment; but will their calumnious writings, will their incendiary discourses be despised also by the people? Are we ignorant that a lie is always an invention at pleasure, and that of consequence it may be proportioned with greater
accu-

accuracy to the dispositions of the moment, and adjusted with precision to our ruling passion? Are we ignorant that a lie is always a simple idea, and that, being never modified like truth, it will make a stronger impression on the mind? Do we forget that ignorance and misfortune render men suspicious, and that these being the portion of the majority of mankind they will not fail to lend a favourable ear to injurious accusations and calumnies? Let us add to these reflections an observation that is worthy of our notice. The course of opinion is entirely changed. It formerly descended from the highest classes of society to the lowest; and these superior classes, who were necessarily enlightened by education, rejected at least all gross fables, and more art was necessary to deceive them. Evident malignity and palpable scandal were thus detected and stopped in their outset, and could not disseminate their baneful influence. But in the present day, when the people are immediately acted upon and their passions addressed, when their opinions are made use of to excite commotions, all kinds of lies are become infinitely more dangerous, as there is no mound, no sluice which can any longer

suspend their course or prevent their dispersion. In this order of things the sceptre will soon be in the hands of the most daring and fraudulent pretenders. They will preach power to the people, that they may be able to give laws in its name; as ministers, in former times, have been eager to assert the authority of the prince that they might govern every thing by the arbitrary mandate of his will. In both cases there are the same passions predominant; and dangers will only change their exterior, as long as we neglect the empire of reason, or choose any other guide.

Why do we not at least endeavour to suppress those writings, the most scandalous of any, which insult the monarch, and hold up the royal majesty to ridicule? It is doubtless easy to find barren spectators who will laugh at the low and scurrilous images introduced into subjects which have never before been treated but with reverence. It is the effect of all contrasts when they are presented to the imagination, and it is thus that superficial wits have gained admiration when they have first played their jests on religious ceremonies: but the presumption will be no more profitable to society

society in one instance than in the other. Do we imagine that the language of forbearance and respect which has ever been employed in speaking of the person of the king, and the various symbols of his greatness, was introduced from fear? This old practice is founded on the good of the state, and is to be referred to a social principle. Men felt that the employment of force, though it were in perpetual exertion, would be inadequate to the maintenance of public order; and that such means would be attended with alarming severities peculiarly incompatible with gentleness of manners and the spirit of liberty. These reflections led them to invest the chief of the empire with all the majesty that could attract respect and homage, in order that he might unite to his real power the authority of opinion, an authority whose universal and regular operation would keep men in the observance of their duties without violence and without commotion. The authority of a father over his child suggested the first idea of this beneficent power, and a more striking example of it still is to be found in the support that religious opinions constantly give to morals. A free country should desire more

than any other, a species of dominion which renders the odious intervention of an armed force and the degrading use of correction and punishment less frequent and less necessary. In the mean time our legislators, instead of calling these sublime ideas to their assistance, believe themselves never so truly great as when they sport with the long established principles of honour, and treat conventions with disdain in which they neither acknowledge the stamp of experience nor the signature of universal wisdom,

Every benefit is expected from the love of liberty ; but the social edifice is composed of parts which necessarily require one bond to unite them. I have greater hopes from the succour of patriotism, the only sentiment whose excess is never dangerous. But even this generous sentiment stands in need of all the virtues to establish and consolidate its empire. When detached from them, it cannot always resist selfish considerations ; and frequently the most paltry, those which spring from wounded vanity and disappointed ambition, are sufficient to unnerve it. Human nature is no better than this : let us not therefore

fore trust to the first effervescence of our minds, let us not upon the faith of a momentary enthusiasm enact laws for a perpetuity, and let us not imagine that a single sentiment, even though it should become a passion, can of itself hold in harmony that multitude of interests by which our long established societies are at this moment governed. The strongest of all sentiments, that of revenge, has sometimes sufficed to unite savage nations; but after two thousand years of social habitude, we cannot be governed like them, and vain would be the attempt to reconcile the simplicity and unity of the ideas by which they were actuated, with the agitation of our character and our depraved manners. Indeed nothing can be conceived more exquisitely absurd than the multitude of men of a superior order that are said to surround us, and nothing can be more injurious than the experiments of their intellect and the first essays of their genius. They are like the preternatural books I have somewhere read of, that a malicious fairy endowed with the faculties of motion and speech. Like those books they are said to be abstract and independent, superior to those influences of the

imagination which govern the majority of their species, and which inspire the generality of opinions and sentiments. Together with imagination they destroy the fascinating power not only which springs from the majesty of the throne, but the inspirations of honour, of established customs and manners, of birth and elevated rank, and last of all whatever is to be ascribed to the love of fame and the dread of infamy. Are they not afraid that, in the midst of this indiscriminate destruction, they should at length annihilate that intellectual bond, of all the strongest, the mildest, but the most indispensable, which links us to the obedience of morality, and whose salutary power is ten thousand times more irresistible than all the laborious subtleties of metaphysical legislation?

It is not the French nation only that our legislators are desirous of subjecting to all the conditions of their new theory; they are eager to have the same doctrine promulgated through every country. What profusion of regard for the human species! It might be supposed the more generous since, insurrection and violence being the means to be made use

use of, it is apparently the happiness of succeeding generations alone for which they interest themselves. How generous is their anxiety in wishing to extend their benefits even to those petty republics who for successive centuries have been weak enough to believe that they were happy, and who would perhaps at the present moment desire that their lofty mountains should separate them from the influx of our science, as they formerly defended them from the lawlessness of our political passions ! Kind-hearted souls ! restrain a little your benevolence till you can exhibit the spectacle of your own prosperity ; this will be more eloquent than your writings. Meanwhile remember that nothing less than the authority of Moses and the rich fruits of the *Land of Promise* could induce the Israelites to quit their country. These fruits you are as yet unable to shew, and the sacred voice of a prophet is not to be recognised in your cries of proscription and hatred, the only ones which are heard at any considerable distance.

What a series and diversity of reflections present themselves to my mind as I go along !

but the plan I have laid down will not permit me to pursue them. I avoid indeed the discussion of every subject upon which I have not delivered my sentiments during my administration, that I may not be accused of saying now what I would not have said at that time. I do not however aspire at gaining the favour of men at present in possession of power, or rather I conceive not the hope; for I cannot forget that it is by having continually recommended justice, morality, moderation, and kindness, by having presented to their view considerations in which the welfare of the state was materially interested, by having opened their eyes to the dangers which threatened it, and urged their attention to them, that I have incurred the displeasure of the National Assembly, and that my intreaties, renewed too often, have been thought importunate. Meanwhile I would readily consent to be judged by the esteem which my ideas may merit, as expressed in the memoirs which at different periods I have laid before the Assembly, and its various committees. There it would be seen how I every instant pressed the Assembly to adopt such efficacious measures as might reconcile the care of freedom with the preserva-

preservation of public order, and how I enforced the necessity of an executive power that should be equal to the accomplishment of this important object. There it would be seen how I inculcated on the minds of the Assembly that attachment and confidence which the virtues and intentions of the monarch so justly merited. There it would be seen how frequently I recommended moderation both in their principles and systems, and how I wished them not to pull down without building up again. There it would particularly be seen how I undertook the cause of the oppressed, how I appealed in their favour, sometimes to the laws of justice, sometimes to the feelings of generosity; how I spoke of peace in the midst of troubles, and of lenity and forbearance in the midst of hatred and animosity. Lastly, there it would be seen with what zeal I defended the sacred duties of humanity, and how earnestly I demanded, in the name of public tranquillity, and as the greatest blessing that could be conferred on the people, that the Assembly would not abuse the ignorance and credulity of this people, and then convert its blind passions into an instrument of vengeance; that they would not corrupt

rupt its manners before they entrusted it with the government; that they would not employ its unbridled passions as the support of its reign, nor degrade it into an executioner at the moment they were about to elevate it into a master. For this part of my sentiments and my conduct I ask not the gratitude of men: no, I present it as a tribute at the footstool of that Being whom during my whole life I have faithfully served, who is the principle of order and the last end of morality, and to whom it is not, as to our fellow-mortals, painful to render an account of our actions. Willingly do I offer him this tribute of my submission; willingly do I ascribe to him whatever good I have done, at the moment that I am about to enter upon the most honourable measure of my administration, that service to the country in which I presided, the reality of which can least be brought into question. It has ever been the conviction of my mind, and a source of consolation, that without the succour of Providence I could never have triumphed over the numerous obstacles with which I was forced to contend. I speak of the important affair of provisions and the dreadful famine from which I certainly preserved Paris and
many

many of the provinces. In expressing myself thus strongly, it becomes me to give the completest evidence of the truth of my assertion, since when contrasted with the indifference the Assembly has shewn towards me, it amounts almost to an accusation of their conduct.

It may be remembered that about the middle of the year 1789, and till the new harvest afforded an abundant supply of corn, a continual disquietude prevailed at Paris and in the neighbouring provinces. The supplies destined for the use of the capital, and which arrived sometimes by water and sometimes by land, only answered daily to the wants of the day ; and so great was the distress, that the failure of twenty or thirty cargoes in the immense succour derived from foreign countries, would have rendered famine inevitable. This truth, which is known to every body, being once established, it follows that the least remissness, the neglect of a single precaution during a period of fifteen months, would have occasioned the greatest calamities of which it is possible to form an idea ; and when I consider the extent of the supply that was wanted,

and

and the diversity of means it was necessary to employ, when I consider the arduous task I had to execute, and the cares, the anxieties and the fatigues I endured, the recollection still terrifies me.

I ought to observe in the first place that when I was called into office, towards the end of August 1788, the free exportation of corn was permitted, not by a simple toleration, not on the single authority of an arrêt of council, but by a formal law enregistered in all the courts, and which had obtained the applause of the whole nation.

Men thus lived under the charm of an indefinite freedom, and every one applied it as he pleased to his speculations. Government committed the care of the public weal to the action and impression of private interest. In the case of many commerces these two interests are undoubtedly united, and a circumstance frequently recurring they converted into an absolute principle. This principle, one of the doctrines of the philosophical Economists, which lately exploded now began to revive, was not likely to be voluntarily abandoned, or at least the calculations of foresight would not have afforded a sufficient motive to the sacrifice.

An

An undoubting confidence in the salutary effects of liberty is so very commodious to administration, permits them to govern so many things with so little trouble, that probably they would have waited to the last extremity before they shook off a slumber that they believed reason approved and philosophy countenanced.

There was indeed a clause of reserve in the law which had been formed upon the subject for the case of representations being made by the provincial assemblies of dangers likely to arise from this liberty. But the interest of the maritime provinces, which, when exportation is free, draw to themselves the corn of the kingdom, is totally different from that of the central provinces, which are exposed to the risk of losing their subsistence without the possibility of replacing it. Beside, it is not possible for the different parts of a great kingdom to agree respecting the degree of dearth that ought to put an end to exportation; the meaning of the word dearth is vague and uncertain, and depends upon the established proportion between the time and the wages of the labouring part of the community. Of consequence the sentiment and demand of the

different provinces upon this article will never agree till all are pervaded with a general apprehension, and then the period of precaution and prudence is absolutely lost.

Guided by these reflections, and the harvest of 1788 being completed just before my return to office, I applied myself without delay to the discharge of one of the first duties of my situation, by collecting throughout the kingdom the most circumstantial information respecting the new crop, and the corn that was still upon hand of the preceding years harvest. I enquired in like manner into the situation of other countries, and what assistance we might hope to derive from thence. I found that it was necessary, and that instantly, to take every possible precaution ; I therefore procured the suspension of the late act in places where I conceived exportation to be most dangerous ; and on the 7th of September the king issued a general prohibition by an arrêt of council founded on my report.

The necessity of this first step would admit of no delay, and I was not therefore intimidated, as might be supposed, by the consideration, which however presented itself to my mind, that the prohibition, taking place immediately

diately on my promotion to the administration, would infallibly be imputed to my advice. I was not deceived in my conjecture; interested motives are what men are always most ready to see and impute, so much do they appreciate others by what they are conscious of in their own minds.

My system of exportation was extremely simple, as I have had frequent occasion to shew. It was governed by no immutable law, but was allowed or prohibited in conformity to the circumstances of the times.

Meanwhile the demands of the kingdom and the too certain appearances of a real dearth discovering themselves every day, I compared the price of corn in foreign markets with its price in the principal markets of France; and finding the difference not sufficient to give to commerce the requisite activity, I proposed to the king to grant an importation bounty, first upon American corn, and afterward upon every species exported from the different ports of Europe.

This bounty was regulated by an arrêt of council of 23 November 1788, but circumstances obliged me gradually to increase it.

It is the foresight of administration that

makes this sort of encouragement useful, and it is applicable to those periods when, deriving their knowledge from various sources, they judge with certainty that an indispensable commodity will augment in price and soon become scarce. Additional activity should then be given to commerce; but this can only be done by holding out an immediate lure to individual interest, which, differing from public interest, can seldom be influenced by distant and remote considerations.

In ordinary times, by a judicious use of bounties, the care of providing for the wants of a kingdom may be referred to the industry of merchants; but in years of calamity we cannot in prudence trust to the result of their speculations. Probabilities are no longer a sufficient security when the danger becomes imminent, when it threatens the public tranquillity, and when by being realized it may prove the source of the most terrible evils. It is in the midst of such apprehensions that we feel with force both the uncertainty inseparable from all speculations, and the insufficiency of commercial means to supply immense demands. Another important truth presents itself also, and which experience has

has fully demonstrated, and that is, that as soon as corn rises to a certain degree of dearth, merchants will have nothing to do with the commerce; and their determination is founded on just motives. The people blind, ignorant, urged by want, always regards as its enemies those who sell a necessary commodity at a very high price; it bestows upon them the most abusive appellations; it dictates laws to them with violence, and frequently makes them the victims of its error or its misery.

If government then, regardless of these considerations, should in all circumstances indiscriminately rely on the cares of commerce, the kingdom in times of real dearth would be exposed to all the horrors of famine.

Never did this truth appear more evident than in the course of the year 1789. The merchants in various towns of France at the time of the greatest scarcity not only refused to import corn on their own account, but were unwilling to be concerned merely as agents; an office that is commonly sought with eagerness, because it affords a profit of commission without requiring them to advance money and without exposing them to any

Y 3 risk.

risk. The persons whose situation made them dependent on government, accepted such commissions merely because they had not the power of refusal, and in acquitting themselves of their duty many of them were in danger of their lives : yet their undertaking was an act of beneficence, as corn bought on the king's account is always sold below the market price.

I had the good fortune to foresee the course of events ; and judging that it was proper to employ extraordinary means in an extraordinary year, I ordered in good time considerable purchases to be made. I thus procured from England and Ireland a great quantity both of corn and flour before the exportation of these articles was prohibited throughout Great Britain ; and the moment arrived when I regarded this supply as more precious than all the riches of Potosi.

Fears increased, the demand became greater, appearances of famine were more conspicuous, yet still beforehand with my precautions I provided a succour proportioned to the extent of the evil. Italy, Sicily, America, Barbary, Germany, Brabant, Austrian Flanders, Ireland, England, Holland, the Hanseatic towns,
and

and all the Northern countries were made to contribute to the wants of France; and in cases where exportation could not be obtained without particular permission, the king was so urgent in his entreaties that he had frequently the happiness to succeed.

In the mean time as the calamity increased it became necessary to exhaust all the foreign magazines; and for this purpose we were obliged to make use of money, credit, promises, hopes, and whatever the most persevering activity could devise. Including freight and other expences the purchases amounted to a sum exceeding fifty millions of livres*; and though these operations were effected gradually, it is easy to conceive what a prodigious extent

* The quantity purchased, taking in wheat, flour, barley and rice, amounted to near 3,600,000 hundred weight, out of which there remained a supply of speculation for the city of Paris. I cannot tell why M. de Calonne in his last work thinks proper to controvert the articles which relate to this subject and are comprehended in the account of the finances. His whole argument rests upon the quantities mentioned in my memorial of the first of July. But beside that that had no concern but with foreign supplies, M. de Calonne has no suspicion of the increasing extent of the demand during the latter months of the year. It

extent of credit they required. I may assert without vanity, that, in the embarrassing state of public affairs, this credit is chiefly to be ascribed to my intervention. A London merchant, who gave the strongest proofs of confidence, made a declaration of this nature to the municipality of Paris, and other commercial houses would have expressed themselves in similar terms had an opportunity offered. They had every reason to believe that I was constantly mindful of their safety; nor would I on any consideration have suffered their fortunes to be injured by their contributing to save France from the horrors of famine. I have ever esteemed gratitude as one of the first of virtues. This obligation,

would require a volume to answer all the calculations he has made upon the subject of revenue; but I will not take that trouble a second time. Meanwhile I cannot avoid noticing one thing which is perhaps remarkable. It appears in the official papers of M. de Calonne how he expressed himself to the king respecting my administration, and it is well known what was his language upon the subject in the assembly of Notables. I was a spectator of his administration, and I have never repeated his name either to the king, or to any committee, or to any individual member of the National Assembly.

Behold how different are the Gods we serve !

which

which is not a written bond and cannot be prosecuted before the tribunals, becomes so much the more inviolable to hearts naturally virtuous, and it might justly have been included in the list of engagements placed by the National Assembly under the safeguard of French honour.

The species of security which I had given, in order to induce various commercial houses implicitly to rely on us, I considered as a personal tie, and I regarded myself as tacitly involved in the hazards of their confidence. In offering therefore in one instance my fortune as the surety, I conceived that I rather ✓ made a more formal declaration than contracted any new obligation. As the circumstances attending this business have rendered it remarkable, I shall relate the particulars of it. The commercial houses to which I had recourse set no bounds to their confidence; but their own credit had its limits notwithstanding all the means I employed to aid it. It was upon such an occasion, and at the singular period of the first days of July 1789, that, perceiving the absolute necessity of procuring a greater supply of corn for the city of Paris, and fearful of extending the engagements
of

of those merchants regularly employed in making purchases for us in Holland, I found myself obliged to apply to other factors. But in the critical state of public affairs and of the finances in particular, what could be hoped from any commercial house who had had no previous connection with government, and to whom application was made for the first time in a season of danger and embarrassments? I saw the difficulty, and I hesitated not to remove it by rendering this transaction perfectly distinct and independent of the hazards inseparable from public events. I wrote then to Messrs. Hope, celebrated merchants of Amsterdam, and who are known to all Europe; and in giving them a commission I offered, among other means of security, the mortgage of my personal property. I had not received their answer when the orders of the sovereign obliged me to quit the kingdom. On my arrival at Bruxelles I recollected my engagement; it was not too late to retract, as Messrs. Hope could not have had time to act in consequence of it. The sum was a million; and as the offer was perfectly voluntary on my part, it would not have appeared astonishing if I had withdrawn it at a time when I was
driven

driven out of France, and when I left also behind me new ministers who were at least indifferent as to my fortune. But as troubles increased the proposed security was still more necessary to induce Messrs. Hope to execute the commission, and the new supply of provisions I had been thus desirous of obtaining became also every day of greater importance. So far therefore from wishing to dissolve the engagement, as I might have done, I would have given at Bruxelles or any where the same pledge, if it had not been given before. It is remarkable however, and I derive my intelligence from the first clerk of dispatches in the department of finances, it is remarkable that the first letter opened by my successor, M. de Breteuil, was the answer of Messrs. Hope, in which they accepted my proposal and promised to execute the commission. They kept their word, to the great relief of the city of Paris.

Notwithstanding all my cares, all my efforts, all the expedients to which it was possible to have recourse, whether in my public capacity or as a private individual, I still lived in continual anxiety respecting the subsistence of the capital and the neighbouring districts; for it was necessary to provide for them also, by whom

whom the capital itself had commonly been supplied. It was not sufficient that application was every where made for corn, it was not sufficient that the money was raised or the credit procured which the purchases required; it was also necessary that they should arrive in time at our ports; it was necessary to protect them from pillage on the road, sometimes by armed convoys, and sometimes by distributing a portion at a moderate price in the principal towns. Thus, long before relief could be derived from the harvest of 1789, my mind was in continual agitation from the fear of a contrary wind, a shipwreck, and even from the delay of a single boat or a waggon. In short, the foreign stores were exhausted, and I received one day intelligence from Amsterdam, that great market of Europe, that there was not a single bushel of corn to be bought till fresh supplies should arrive from the North. I wrote the most urgent letter to Mr. Pitt, in which I exerted all my abilities to prevail on him to obtain from the king or the parliament leave of exportation to a certain degree. My demand was moderate; but, though it was seconded by the efforts of our ambassador at London, we were unable to succeed.

The ministerial correspondence upon the subject of provisions was for the greater part written with my own hand, and I was often indebted for the zeal of some and the patience and resignation of others to the sincere and earnest manner in which my sentiments were expressed. The king, whom I perpetually informed of the situation of the kingdom, and of the hopes and fears I alternately conceived, allowed and commanded me to give to the merchants and farmers express assurances of his protection, kindness and gratitude ; and alas ! at that time the name of the king had not lost its enchantment, and was of the most essential use. In reality there was no possible expedient which I did not employ. The detail of my cares, now that the danger is passed, would be tiresome to those who should read them. My thoughts were occupied with the same subject every day and every instant ; for, independently of the critical situation of Paris, couriers arrived from all parts to inform me of the most pressing wants sometimes in one place and sometimes in another. One day, after three hours absence, as I returned home from the palace, I found my court filled with these messengers. They crowded round me to deliver

liver their dispatches, and their hands seemed to me to be armed with so many poignards. I retired to my cabinet to read them, and after drying up my tears, convinced that I should increase the evil if I discovered the excess of my feelings, I appeared in the midst of a numerous circle with all the constraint of apparent security. But this effect, great as it was, did not completely deceive those who began to enjoy the pains which corroded my heart, and I had frequent occasion to observe that their looks were more penetrating than the eyes of my friends. Be this as it may, I shall have the sensations ever present to my mind that were excited by the successive arrival of these couriers, the noise of their horses feet, the holla of joy they uttered at the time when they brought, without knowing it, the most distressful intelligence. These circumstances presaging every thing that was terrible, at length produced their effect upon my nerves, and gave me a sort of perpetual trembling. I was twice seized with a very dangerous distemper ; but in all the violence of my fever I was unable for a moment to forget the inquietude of these incidents, and I recollected that expression in my speech to the States General—

neral—" Glory and honour are the motives
" which are suggested to animate you ; but
" alas ! there are critical moments, there is a
" state of anxiety and weariness, when the
" sentiments that a minister would most natu-
" rally require from the spectators are sym-
" pathy and compassion."

My own feelings quickly became those of every one about me, when in the middle of the night they were forced to awake me to sign some direction, or to dictate an instruction to some agent ; to give orders that the most pressing necessity demanded ; to exert an authority necessary to prevent the destruction of a supply ; to furnish money to fill up an unexpected deficiency in a place where purchases had been directed to be made ; in a word, to divert by a thousand expedients a misfortune at hand, or a danger that might overwhelm us.

It was particularly the idea of so large a city as Paris wanting bread for four and twenty hours, that agitated my soul and disturbed my imagination. During the day I was able to overcome this terror, but it returned with violence in my dreams ; and every morning, for many months together, I was awaked by
palpi-

palpitations of heart, which were one of the causes of the disorder brought upon me by so many anxieties and sufferings, and of which I shall never be cured.

I have before observed that I was not ignorant when I formed at Bâle the resolution to return into France, that I was going to place myself in the midst of the alarms I had already experienced, since it was impossible to enter on the full enjoyment of the new harvest till the expiration of three or four months. Meanwhile another sort of obstacle had arisen during my absence. The pillage of the convoys upon the Seine had been the consequence of the relaxation of public order; and the transfer of the functions of the police into the hands of a numerous municipality, originally ill constructed, unexperienced in the arduous business of provisions, had annihilated the union of efforts necessary in such an undertaking. Yet the municipality left it to government to take care to obtain from foreign countries the necessary supply; so that the responsibility of the minister remained as before: nothing was diminished but his authority and his powers.

I say nothing of the various artifices employed to enhance the terror, and to give a deceitful appearance of plenty to the bakers shops. I could only speak of this subject upon report, for I never procured any accurate information respecting it; and I am not unaware that, in moments of famine or of fear, the desire which individuals entertain to secure to themselves a supply frequently prompts them to the same conduct as might have been dictated by a spirit of monopoly or of malevolence. The wants of Normandy had displayed themselves in the most alarming manner, and the law of necessity had obliged Rouen and every town on the borders of the Seine, to stop, for their own subsistence, a considerable part of the cargoes destined originally for Paris. If therefore I had not by every needful precaution obtained foreign succour adequate to so many demands; if on my return from Bâle in particular, I had not immediately sent sums of money into all parts to make new and large purchases, Paris and the neighbouring provinces would infallibly have been desolated by the horrors of famine. The idea of such a distress, added to the various other causes of confusion and disorder which

are in the recollection of every man, presents a complication of misery the spectacle of which is too much for the imagination to support. It was my destiny however, after having by incredible efforts and at the risk of my life supplied the wants of France, that I should lose the good opinion of the inhabitants of Paris, because the moment arrived when the bread, made entirely of foreign flour, had no longer its habitual quality. Yet was it possible in such long maritime transports that all our cargoes should escape damage? Was it possible at the close of so extensive a transaction, when we had been obliged to collect the last sweepings as it were of all the granaries in the two worlds, that no mouldy corn should fall to our lot?

They were complaints like these, and accusations equally void of foundation, that were seized upon by certain manufacturers of libels, vile inventors of calumny and falsehood, to undermine my character with the nation at large. I disdained to answer them; I felt that it would disgrace me to drag them from the obscurity into which they were sure to fall. Their names and their works will be lost in the immense lumber of useless reams
that

that no man condescends to open, though they succeed, I know not how, to gain readers for a single day, and to poison for the moment the public mind.

The National Assembly narrowly inspects my whole administration. They can enter it by a thousand ways, and I am no longer present to make any resistance. Let them speak; it is to them alone I will give an answer.

The dog of Albania, which Porus made a present of to Alexander, was for a long time accused of pusillanimity; all the animals of Asia were brought into the Circus, and he refused to fight; but when the lion appeared, he roused himself, rushed upon and defeated him.

The purchase of corn, on the national account, amounted from the date of autumn 1788 to an immense capital, and the loss sustained by the public treasury was very considerable. Government could not avoid voluntarily making great sacrifices. Corn gradually rose in foreign countries to so high a price that, when the expence of freight, risk, damage, and the rate of exchange which was

very unfavourable, were added, it was beyond the abilities of the people, and to have insisted on their purchasing at such a price an indispensable commodity, would have been condemning them to perish with misery. Beside, in times of general distress the people do not receive laws, they give them; and under these circumstances it is prudent in government to confine its injunctions within the limits of its authority, and to take care not to betray the secret of its weakness.

✓ To these causes of loss should be added the numerous pillages in consequence of the anarchy that prevailed in the month of July, and of the power of the people. On my return from Bâle I found the greater part of the posts along the Seine either forced or abandoned. It was necessary to re-establish them; and this expence, together with that of convoys and armed vessels, should be taken into the account. The frequent necessity of recurring to land carriage when the supplies would admit of no delay, was another heavy burthen to the treasury. We have to estimate also various indulgences to a great number of municipalities, that were unable, notwithstanding the low price at which corn was sold,

to make up the whole of their payments. There was beside, in different quarters, and at Paris in particular, an immense quantity of rice distributed gratis. In short, the confusion which frequently prevailed in the capital, and which immediately after the epocha of the 11th of July was extreme, obliged the administration of the Hôtel-de-Ville, to be less severe and exact than was desirable, and the sacrifices that political events made necessary are well known.

From these and other causes inseparable from so extensive a transaction, and at so unfortunate a period, the loss to the public treasury did not fall short of forty millions (£1,666,666). But if every purchase were made at the proper time and place ; if they did not exceed the demands, and were intrusted to foreign merchants equally honest and intelligent ; if their accounts will bear the most rigorous inspection ; if there were no abuses but such as human prudence could not guard against ; if every part of the negociation may be examined, calculated and verified ; if commercial deputies have at my solicitation been long engaged in this enquiry, and a special committee of the National Assembly have

united its knowledge to theirs; this sum, large as it is, cannot be objected to, unless the investigation be accompanied at the same time with a tariff of the nett valuation of the lives of many millions of men.

The knowledge of the prodigious operations I have been describing should not lead us to unjust censure, but to a reflection of great importance both to the happiness and welfare of the state. The great expence of money and anxiety which a single year of dearth occasions, should induce us never to permit without the maturest deliberation the unlimited exportation of corn. But as every restriction on the liberty of this commerce diminishes the customary price of a commodity the production of which constitutes the chief wealth of the soil, it seems to follow as a necessary consequence, that while the state, for the sake of the public welfare, is obliged to restrain the cultivators of the earth in the disposal of their commodities, it ought not to impose in a very heavy degree a tax upon the earth itself. This forbearance towards the proprietors is a sort of indispensable compensation for the sacrifice of liberty we demand from them.

Another inference following from the same principle

principle is, that in proportion as the existence of a superfluity in the kingdom to supply the demand of unproductive years is a necessary precaution, in the same proportion it becomes us not to be too eager respecting any other species of cultivation. Let us take tobacco for an example, and I observe that the necessity of importing this commodity from foreign countries for a period of ten years, has less influence upon the balance of commerce than a single year of dearth of the necessaries of life. Nor is the truth of this observation limited to the mere proportion between the value of the imports of tobacco for ten years, and the value of the imports of corn in a single year of unfavourable harvest. It also involves another consideration of moment, that for all that you draw from a foreign country in pursuance of a regular and established system, you may contrive a reciprocal commerce that shall balance the inconvenience; but whatever you draw in an irregular and unexpected way, must inevitably be paid for in money.

It is farther to be remarked, that France being the only kingdom in Europe that purchases tobacco from her neighbours, she can, especially if she employ but one factor, resist

the impositions of those that sell ; but when she purchases corn, other nations come into competition with her, and the irresistible nature of the demand obliges her to deal with them upon their own terms.

Nothing can be more unjust than to suppose that a sufficient supply can always be obtained by a mere determination to protect the liberty of transporting corn from province to province. This can never happen when the scantiness of the harvest inspires men with alarm ; and least of all when under the strange divisions and subdivisions of authority that are now established. The oath therefore imposed on the national guard, to protect this transport in its utmost extent, is frivolous and nugatory ; they will neither have the power nor the will when the minds of men are filled with anxiety, when they shall perceive corn plenteously descending from the springs of our different rivers to the extremities of the kingdom, and never returning with a similar current towards the centre. Oaths are superfluous when they attempt to bear down the genuine sentiments of men at a time that the risk of famine appears to be imminent. Our country under such circumstances becomes more and more contracted ; our province, our district,

district, our town, our corporation, and at last perhaps our house and our family is the whole of our country.

For all these reasons it is necessary carefully to watch for the preservation of a superfluity. Superfluity alone can keep the minds of men at peace. For such a purpose it is just to impose a restraint upon the exportation of corn, and of consequence just to compensate the effects of that restraint by reducing within moderate bounds the amount of the tax that falls upon land. Such is the system of ideas that experience suggests, and her lessons are of a thousand times more worth than the imaginary theories of political œconomy. These theories perpetually contradict each other; and the man who trusts to them can never distinguish between their different claims, or tell to which of their opposite arguments it becomes him to subscribe.

I have thus reviewed the principal measures of my administration, and my task is nearly finished. This will not be regretted; for I am well aware that the present moment is not favourable to me, and I should myself have found the journey tedious, if I had not in
looking

looking back on past events sometimes diverted my attention by useful remarks or general observations.

I wish however, before I conclude, to acquit myself of a particular duty, and a duty that, I know not why, from the complexion of the times, it requires some courage to fulfil. But while I trace my own claims on the nation, I should think myself justly chargeable with ingratitude or indifference, I should think myself guilty of a crime for which I upbraid others, if I were deterred by the fear of a criticism, clothed if you please in the most menacing form, that of ridicule, from mentioning, in this my last dissertation on public affairs, the continual cares of a faithful friend whose every instant has been consecrated to the doing good. Profane laughter disgraced the National Assembly when, in the most painful circumstance in my life, I mentioned for the first time a name that so many virtues ought to have rendered respectable: but, in despite of their laughter, I feel some pleasure in encountering anew that proud disdain, that superiority of tone which has little terror when it is in opposition to the language of decency and reason. I will say then that ma-

dam Necker—laugh again, your public virtue, as yet in its infancy, will doubtless permit you ; laugh, Europe is sufficiently acquainted with your long and serious examination of the moral life of Maria Theresa Levasseur*, and mistakes in a matter of delicacy are in no danger of being imputed to you. The quick apprehensions of a landsman are unintelligible to those who are accustomed to the ocean. I will say then that madam Necker has perhaps done more for the relief of calamity than any statesman of us all ; and to put myself and my own services out of the question, her merits alone would severely reproach your indifference. The formation and government of a house of charity, which has served as a model to many others, is by no means the only action of notorious virtue that belongs to my amiable friend. Her footsteps may be traced in hospitals, in prisons, in infirmaries, in the miserable hiding-places where poverty and want have found their last asylum. Her active beneficence is too copious for recital, and I should fear to offend her if I attempted to describe it. She needs not the esteem and

* Widow of J. J. Rousseau. T.

approbation of mortals ; it is before another tribunal she has prepared to give in her answer.

I shall mention one circumstance more relative to my own conduct, and I feel beforehand a blush spread over my face. Yes, it is painful to me to speak it, and a strong feeling of the censure implied in the indifference of the National Assembly could alone tempt me to do it. I estimate the circumstance below the most trivial of my services ; but in the day of oppression we are pardonable perhaps if we omit nothing that is in our favour. I served the state seven years with the most entire disinterestedness ; and when I declare in this place that I refused every emolument of office, I ought to add in answer to some malicious insinuations, that in these emoluments I include not only the fixed stipends, but also the various perquisites authorized by ancient custom : that is to say, independently of the salary of minister of the finances, fixed till lately at two hundred thousand franks ; independently of the salary of minister of state, fixed at twenty thousand ; independently of the pensions attached to those offices ; I have
equally

equally refused, without exception or reserve, both the annual perquisites of control annexed to the office of minister of the finances; and the *beakers of wine*, always of a considerable and frequently of a scandalous amount, received by this minister at the renewal of the leases of the farmers general and of the *régie*; and the customary services upon entering into office; and the presents of the *pays d'états*; and the gold and silver medallions presented at the beginning of every new year by the municipalities, corporations, and persons holding sinecures in the treasury; and the exemption from duties upon the fabrication of such additional plate as is requisite in distinguished situations; and the gratis boxes at the theatres; and the allowance of wax candles, and other miserable particulars*. Nothing there-

* I ought to mention that, from sentiments of respect to the city of Paris, I accepted on the return of a new year, in the course of my first administration, a purse of a hundred medallions of silver, bearing the arms of the city, and amounting in value, it is supposed, to about forty or fifty crowns. I believe also, though I am not very sure, that the states of Provence sent me two or three times some of the fruits of their country, or a packet of coffee just imported from the Levant. It is possible that other trifles of this kind may have escaped my memory; but they are not worth notice.

fore

fore has ever sullied that pure disinterestedness which I imposed on myself as a law : and at this moment, when no benefit is any longer to be expected from me ; when, to the shame of France, the man who shall attack me is sure to gain friends by it ; I defy any one, be he who he may, in administration or out of administration, to contradict in a single point the truth of my declaration ; I defy any one to charge me with having had the smallest interest in any transaction, the least concern in any speculation on the public funds or loans, or with the having placed any of my friends or relations either in the offices connected with my own department, or in those subject to the nomination of the king's other ministers ; and I at this moment regularly pay certain pensions, the expence of which I took upon myself in order to lighten to my heart the burthen imposed by the severity of my principles. The National Assembly therefore may shew me what indifference it pleases, I shall equally remain in various ways a creditor of the state, and never was I more proud of this advantage, never did I enjoy it so completely. When every thing is contested, when claims are more accurately investigated, and
pretensions

pretensions undergo a new enquiry, we then have recourse to our old parchments, and we find titles which had escaped our memory, and which our litigious neighbours oblige us to bring forward.

It has undoubtedly been sufficiently painful to me to enter into the details I have given. They however have their share in a general view of my public conduct, and in one respect are perhaps entitled to the attention of the moralist. He will infer from them that nothing so much increases the bitterness of animosity, or at least that nothing renders it so loud in its invective, as the thus defending oneself by a scrupulous minuteness from every plausible attack. If this and that place be left open to censure, undoubtedly an outcry will be excited against the minister; but that outcry limits itself to a single point; while on the other hand where all is clear, sound and invulnerable, malignity makes an uninterrupted round, and, while it seeks in vain to discover a fault, is attended in its progress by an echo loud in its effect, and irresistible in its nature.

I might also estimate at something the loan of two millions four hundred thousand livres which

which I advanced to the public treasury twelve years ago, and at the epoch of the commencement of the last war. It was lent at five per cent. interest, and during so long a period it has encountered the most critical and dangerous circumstances ; but I would not call it in either during my administration, or on my retreat, or when loans bore a much higher interest. I was fearful of giving the signal of distrust, and I have withstood the solicitations of my friends, who were uneasy at seeing so large a portion of my property in one place.

It was this deposit however, sacred in so many points of view, that one section of Paris proposed lately to the other divisions to seize, if I did not in the space of three months make my appearance and account for the sums of money that had passed through my hands. What blindness ! Is it possible men should be so easily deceived ? It is doubtless to me they owe an account, and an account that they will not find it easy to draw up. Mine are all perfectly open, and for a long time have been enveloped in no mystery or obscurity. The tongue of rumour would soon have proclaimed it, had they afforded even the pretext for any singular animadversion ; and nothing

I be-

I believe has escaped enquiry. You may trust to the Argus eyes of the various committees of finance. You may trust to those clerks, those spies, who were made sure of sufficiently early. You may trust to those enemies, made so by a long course of severe measures, as well as to men who, though without passion, are not less disposed to pull down old idols, were it merely to offer the ruins as a testimony of their new worship. It ought to be remembered that in the secret register, known by the name of the *Red Book*, nothing could be found with which to reproach me during the course of my two administrations. My detractors felt a momentary hope, when they saw me oppose the ardent curiosity that displayed itself of examining this register, in order to proclaim every fault which government might have committed. They could not, or they were unwilling to comprehend, that it was the duty of a minister, though perfectly uninvolved in these errors, to keep from the light the melancholy secret; that it was his duty to cover them, if I may so say, with his mantle, at a time when their publicity could be productive of no advantage. What was gene-

rous in my conduct on this occasion some have disdained to perceive, and others have converted into reproach. One might suppose that there was no place in the hearts of men for any sentiment but that of hatred or revenge. They are sentiments against which my heart has ever been shut. I know them not, nor do I wish to know them. I feel at this moment all the weight of the injustice and oppression that are exercised against me; but though I have a painful sense of the injury, my resentment is at the same time free from all asperity.

Sometimes when I am alone at the foot of those mountains where the ingratitude of the representatives of the commons has banished me, and I hear the impetuous winds shake my asylum and throw down the trees which surround it, I exclaim perhaps with king Lear :

“ Blow winds, rage, blow; I tax not you,
“ you elements, with unkindness; I called
“ not you my children, I never gave you
“ kingdom.”

When I began this work, it seemed as if it would be filled with reproaches, and that I should address them to the whole nation; but as I call to mind the services I have rendered

dered it, I recollect at the same time the honourable marks of esteem which it has shown towards me, and like the prophet, *after having come upon the mountain to curse, I would stay there only to bless.* ✓

It is however necessary, for the instruction of those who go full sail with the current and give themselves up without distrust to public favour, that I should point out how near they are to rocks upon every sea. It will be seen, nor can I prevent it, with what severity I have been treated by the National Assembly, or rather by a small number of men who, having made themselves its masters, have inspired the minds of the Assembly with all their passions, and who have thus clothed in their scanty robes, what was most grand and majestic in idea, the united deputies of the greatest of nations. These men were jealous, envious, vindictive, and they were desirous that all about them should feel like themselves: they were imperious, and they placed their first yoke on the National Assembly. Like another Popilius, they have drawn the circle of opinions and thoughts, beyond which they forbid it to pass. The Assembly

thus become captive, and the minister still proud and independent, could no longer pursue the same path. He disengaged himself from himself that he might rise to general ideas and public sentiments, and be under no empire but that of reason and justice; the compliant Assembly submitted to the politics of the day, to the will of its guides, and to their individual passions.

On my return from exile, I embraced the impulse of affection and confidence which for a moment prevailed in my favour, to dispose the minds of men to an act of public generosity, and a political measure that would have been durable in its consequence and productive of universal advantage. Those who heard me at the Hôtel-de-Ville joined with one accord in the sentiment that animated me, and the impression communicated on all sides. But the leaders of the National Assembly saw only in my conduct and in its fortunate event, an ascendancy that was offensive to them, and they entered into a resolution not only to make my hopes miscarry, but to "destroy my popularity;" and from that moment nothing was neglected that was likely to

to

to effect this purpose. The auxiliary army of news-writers, fabricators of libels, motion-makers in the different clubs, and hawkers, the correspondents appointed to direct the sentiments of the different provinces, and all the classes of their coadjutors, every secret agent instigated by the former, or set on by the latter, were put in motion. Calumnies, lies, base insinuations, impossible charges were the first arms put into the hands of those whose function it was to circumvent and destroy me. It was for the smallest piece of money, for a liard, for nothing indeed, that they vended every morning, with a loud noise and without obstacle, the most abominable writings against me, and to keep alive the curiosity of the people, they embellished them with the most audacious and abusive titles. If the non-payment of a part of the taxes, or the payment of others in paper, obliged me to seek every where for coin, and to collect into the public treasury the quantity that was indispensable, either to purchase the flour and cattle necessary for the supply of Paris, or to pay the wages of the multitude of men employed on works of charity, these cares on my part were interpreted into a

design of collecting all the money into the treasury in order to excite I know not what revolution. If money was sent from Paris by the treasurers of the army and navy for the pay of the troops, and for the works carrying on in the port of Brest, I was accused of wishing to send all the coin out of the kingdom. If I had the courage and honesty to defend the claims of the creditors of the count ✓ d'Artois, or at least to explain the original engagement that was made with them, I had some suspicious connexion with that prince. If I recommended justice and lenity towards oppressed citizens, I thought of their interests only, and was in league with them. If I spoke in the name of the king with moderation, but at the same time with dignity, I sought to restore despotism. If I was unable to make out by the appointed day all the accounts demanded of me, I was desirous of concealing robberies and peculations. In short, the purchases I made in foreign countries of corn and flour, those supplies due to my vigilance and which saved us from famine, were sometimes represented as the cause of dearness, and sometimes as a monopoly. The most important services were converted
into

into crimes by the sacrilegious pencil of men to whom the people listened, whom they believed, and whom persons in authority permitted to write morning and evening, and to declaim in public every hour of the day. It happened to me, as to many others, to perceive in the corner of a street a crowd of wretched objects who, while they gave a favourable ear to the orator appointed to read a libel in which my reputation was shamefully mangled, were devouring at the same time the bread which they held in their hands, and which in general had been obtained through my cares and assiduity. How vile the plot, the chief object of which is to make the people ungrateful ! It is sowing with tares a field that of itself would have produced salutary fruit ; it is contending openly against the great views of morality ; it is doing an evil the bounds of which cannot be ascertained, for we know not how closely all the virtues are connected together, and how they reciprocally support each other, so that freedom from restraint in one instance is sometimes productive of general depravity.

Justices

In the month of August 1789 I proposed a

A a 4

necessary

✓ necessary loan, and I shewed how important it was that this first resort to national credit should be signalized by the zeal of the lenders. I mentioned also five per cent. as the interest which was desirable on many accounts. The Assembly however despised my opinion and experience, they felt a secret pleasure in censuring and condemning me in an article respecting which I might be supposed to be most competent; and they fixed the interest at four and half. The event did not justify this determination. The loan miscarried, the difficulties of government were considerably increased by it, and they thus exhibited to all Europe, what ought to have been concealed, the limits of national credit, and the discord that was springing up between the Assembly and the minister.

I presented to the Assembly my portion of the patriotic contribution, I signified to them that it exceeded the established valuation. Of this circumstance they took not the smallest notice, at the same time that the slightest present from the most fortuitous giver was received with acclamations. Well, this I will suppose is of no moment: but I go on, and I
excite

excite my former countrymen to display their liberality upon the present occasion. They readily adopt the suggestion; the desire of displaying their esteem and friendship for me contributes, by their own confession, to inspire this conduct. I signify to the Assembly with sentiments of exultation a first offer on their part of nine hundred thousand livres; and the Assembly, after having received similar testimonies of respect from many other foreigners, are suddenly smit with a scruple; and the unprecedented proceeding they adopt, with respect to an offer of which I had been the prompter and the instrument, is an absolute refusal.

On the first appearance of dearth a committee of provisions was instituted by the Assembly; but it was suffered to fall to the ground the moment they perceived the dangers that were connected with this delicate transaction. They were desirous of sharing in no respect with the minister in responsibility, and they satisfied themselves with receiving certain accusations, the falsehood and absurdity of which they could not fail quickly to discover.

The

The committee of finances acted equally from a spirit of examination and enquiry; but when I urged them to participate in the just apprehensions of government, they absolutely refused to take the smallest share. They proposed indeed, whenever they pleased, general regulations without my knowledge, and which frequently increased the embarrassments of the moment; but they prudently kept themselves clear of all real difficulties.

The king, influenced by the reasons I presented to him, urged the Assembly to consent to the appointment of a board of direction to the treasury, the members of which were to be chosen by his majesty from the representatives of the nation. Nothing could be more conformable to the public good; nothing was better calculated to maintain a good understanding between the legislative body and administration. But the Assembly wished to avoid also this kind of responsibility, as long as difficulties subsisted, and the danger bore upon me; whereas, when I was no longer involved, and the creation of a considerable quantity of assignats, of all sums, afforded a supply to the treasury for a long time to come,

and reduced its management to the simple distribution of money, the committee of finances seized upon the entire control of this department.

Account upon account, notes upon notes, statement after statement were demanded of me; and if the persons under me were incapable of so much labour, in addition to the regular business of office, a murmur was excited upon the least delay, and the Assembly seemed to lie in wait for the most trivial pretext in order to raise an outcry against me. These accounts were afterwards criticised; the most dexterous undertook to embroil the matter, and I was compelled to explanations, answers, and discussions without end. Every information which the Assembly, distracted by a thousand different occupations, could not retain in their memory, they believed that they had never received; and while men of every country the least accustomed to affairs of this nature, perfectly understood the situation of our finances, the National Assembly seemed to be ignorant of it, and care was taken to fill the minds of the public with ideas conformable to this opinion.

It

It was in this manner the people spoke of me through the greater part of the kingdom—"We loved him; we would have sacrificed our lives for him; but our sentiments changed when we were told that he had embezzled the property of the nation."—"But how can you believe this?" it was said in reply.—"Oh! it is certain; we have seen it in print!"—Such was the effect of those libels the circulation of which was every where tolerated and encouraged; this is what the people were led to believe of a man who had served the state with a disinterestedness and generosity that are unexampled. But the people, it is said to me, will one day be convinced of their error. Yes, when I shall be no more, and malignity shall have exhausted all its venom.

In the month of July 1790 I laid before the National Assembly an immense account of the whole receipt and expenditure from the first of May 1789 to the first of May 1790. By a surprising effort of industry this work, in the midst too of the current business, was completed in three months. Yet who has not heard of the complaints of
the

the Assembly respecting the delay of this very account? and when it was received, so little was the attention paid to it that many of the deputies demand it again at this moment, and no one is astonished that no report has been made upon it. They are examining it, it is said. But if the sixty deputies that compose the committee of finances require more than eight months to verify this account, can they be angry that a single individual should have employed three in drawing it out? To the fortunate every thing succeeds; or, to speak with sincerity, the arguments of the strongest are always the best.

What shall I say more? Millions upon millions have been under my care and direction during the space of seven years, and not a single reproach could be made against my æconomical management; and yet at the epoch of the creation of assignats, the National Assembly took it suddenly into their heads that they would not send these bills to the public treasury. They distributed them sparingly, sometimes once a month, sometimes once a fortnight, and sometimes once a week; and this precaution was employed

ployed respecting the man whom all Europe would perhaps have wished as the security of the National Assembly itself.

In the mean time, always consistent in their way, the Assembly, upon every demand of these assignats, expressed their astonishment and anger, and exclaimed loudly against it. It was with difficulty that the men of good sense in the committee of finances could make them understand that, the wants of the state being once known and established, it was necessary to pay them with the money that had been created. It is remarkable that after my retreat, though the wants of the state were greater, every thing went on easily. To give a colour to this it is said, that at length the Assembly had the accounts made out upon their own plan : but the same person who did this business under me, does it still ; his method was found to be a judicious one, and it underwent no alteration. The declaimers in the National Assembly have perhaps never read these accounts, they have not had time ; it is therefore from men and not measures that they judge.

One might have supposed that the Assembly, persevering in its spirit of criticism, would have found an occasion of praising some part of my conduct, a single trait at least of my administration. But never has the smallest eulogium escaped it. Its own receipts in this way have been immense, and immense has been the gratification it has derived from them; yet they are careful not to deal out the smallest pittance to the minister, or make him happy for a moment. This parsimony is not sufficient: they repeat every instant the abuses of past times, and inveigh against these abuses in the most vehement language. Justice might demand that they should give to every one his due, and that an honourable distinction should be accorded to those who have merited it; but they carefully avoid it, and, what is worse, they allow themselves to establish their unjust conduct into principles. "The committee," it is the committee of pensions that speaks, "has admitted of no cessation in this great enquiry into ministerial dilapidations; it has traced them through all the different papers, documents and journals in which it could be discovered, without concerning itself as to who was
" the

“ the minister : it was dilapidation, not men,
“ that was the object of their detection. If
“ it should ever be thought advisable to call
“ to an account any of the ministers who
“ have sat at the helm since 1774, then in-
“ deed those ministers may quarrel as much
“ as they please, and endeavour to throw off
“ the fault from one to the other. The com-
“ mittee of pensions has kept aloof from
“ these personal debates.” What a principle
of legislation is this ! Whenever a censure is
to be passed upon the servants of the execu-
tive government, they prefer taking a certain
number of years in the mass, that they may
subject successive administrations, virtuous or
prodigal, alike to the gripe of their bloody
talons, leaving it to the individuals to settle
among themselves how far the wounds they
have received are truly deserved. “ It is for
“ them,” says the committee of pensions, “ to
“ quarrel as much as they please, and endea-
“ vour to throw the fault from one to the
“ other.” What supercilious haughtiness !
Nothing but its absurdity can diminish its
severity. But it is thus, sometimes with more
and sometimes with less indifference, that the
committees and orators of the National Assem-
bly

bly have expressed themselves upon the article of ministers. Civility they probably regard as an aristocratical accomplishment.

They gave the name of *ministerial insolence* to some wise and moderate observations which I addressed to them; yet these observations were accompanied with deference and homage both to the industry and talents of the Assembly. But it is true that I have always felt the dignity that is inseparable from a virtuous man, who by the feelings of his heart is united to something still greater than earthly authority.

I have also never lost sight of the majesty becoming in him who speaks in the name of the chief of the empire, and I have always been mindful of the rank which the king should hold in the affairs of state. These feelings, which were strong in my breast, doubtless raised the style of my discourses above the language which the National Assembly was accustomed to hear.

There has been a uniform policy in the conduct of this Assembly. They wished every thing to be their work, every thing to exist by their instrumentality. Ministers

B b

there-

therefore who had a little reputation of their own could not be agreeable to them ; and I have great reason to believe that but for the agitation of the city of Paris and of the kingdom, and but for the fervid eloquence of M. de Lally, they would have permitted me quietly to sink into oblivion at the time of my exile 11 July.

When the deputies first met at Paris this disposition was not yet formed. But the fear which each of them felt of injuring his influence by any intercourse with ministers quickly discovered itself ; and personal considerations thus overbore the natural desire that ought to have existed in the representatives of the nation to unite themselves in every way with the first defender of liberty, and the firmest friend of the people.

In short, I perceived too plainly that the chiefs of the National Assembly, and those of the ruling club at Paris, were impatient to see me out of office ; and to effect my resignation some lie was every day invented, or some plot concerted. Twice the project was formed of attacking my house. I am not astonished at the plots of the malignant ; but that the National Assembly should be informed of these

these plots, without interfering; that they should openly tolerate incendiary writers, and support them in the habit of misleading as they please the minds of the people, and exciting them to the most violent outrages; is a proceeding beneath animadversion, and of which we can only express our opinion by silence.

At three different intervals I informed the Assembly of my intended retreat from office. The state of my health, the only motive I alleged, drew from them no token of sympathy; and when, the day after an insurrection that obliged me to quit my house, and which was the last drop of the bitter cup I had so long been forced to drink, I spoke in a more precise manner of my approaching departure for the waters; when I informed them at the same time, that I should afterwards retire to my estate, the most perfect silence reigned in the Assembly, and they called for the order of the day. Thus the utmost indifference and most pointed disdain were the only answer received from the representatives of the nation by him who, during the course of seven years, had made every sacrifice to the state that could be expected

from man. I might have claimed more on the score of mere pity; and such treatment, so little expected after so many services, has made an impression on my heart that will remain for ever. It must make a blot in history either for the Assembly or for me, and in either case I see only misfortune. ✓

It was impossible after this treatment, unparalleled in the history of mankind, that I could any longer defer my retreat. I however remained a whole week at Paris in the midst of all the outrage of calumny and detestation, in the midst of the inexorable violence that an infernal industry excited against me. I still was weak enough to expect that some repentance, some justice, some sympathy would be exerted towards me. At last I set out; no one person condescending to partake of the struggles of my bosom, and the anguish of my heart. I set out: the letters had gone before me that breathe a contagion of hatred, injustice, and persecution, and teach the provinces to be cruel and unfeeling like their writers. As rapid in their effects as the wand of Medea, they appease and revive the furies at their pleasure. I had soon a proof
of

of their malignant influence. I rested for a few moments in the post-house of the little town of Arcis-sur-Aube, free from distrust, when presently I saw a crowd of people make their appearance, and a number of armed men who entered my apartment. They began with asking me for my passports. I had three, besides a particular billet of the king. I shewed them. The municipality and the district found them to be regular ; but some instigators of tumult persuaded the national guard to think otherwise, and violence was triumphant. Madam Necker and myself were conducted, between a file of musketeers, to an inn that was assigned us, and where it was at first their intention to keep us apart from our people ; but they contented themselves afterwards with fixing a guard at the door of the inn, and prohibiting us all intercourse with any one ; and that no precaution might be neglected they placed a *corps de garde* under us. I expressed a desire of writing to the National Assembly : it was granted, but upon condition that none of my attendants should carry the letter. It was intrusted to two citizens of Arcis, who, on their arrival, concerted with such members of the

Assembly as were most inimical to me. They fixed the day and hour when my letter should be delivered to the Assembly. A debate took place in which all the venom of impotent malice discovered itself: the Assembly however at last consented that I should be indulged with the rights of man, and that no obstacle should be opposed to my journey, though they carefully abstained from any censure upon the national guard of Arcis. They were fearful that the president, who was a man of integrity, might adopt in his answer a style bearing some resemblance to that of gratitude; and as one or two deputies had been so daring as to hint at thanking me for my services, it was exacted of the president that he should communicate his letter before he sent it away, and he was obliged, contrary perhaps to his private sentiments, to confine himself to the rigorous terms that were imposed upon him.

Conduct like this on the part of the Assembly seems to surpass imagination. Was it to me they refused a word of gratitude, and were afraid of addressing a single expression of civility! One might be led for a moment to suppose that the approbation of their High
Mighti-

Mightinesses was an extraordinary act of condescension, unprecedented in their new records; but I have not this consolation: the Assembly distribute such favours with the utmost readiness; the smallest municipalities, and a multitude of individuals have received them, and are still receiving them every day. I remember, among other instances, to have seen a vote of thanks formally decreed to an officer of the national guard, who had arrested an individual proscribed by the committee of research, or who had simply discovered the place where he was secreted. If we judge from the common laws of gratitude, there is surely something objectionable in this mode of dispensing justice, and the system of retribution observed by the Assembly stands in need of improvement.

I quitted Arcis-sur-Aube, which regrets perhaps at present the manner in which it treated me; and reinforced by a fourth passport, that of the National Assembly, I continued my journey. On my arrival however at Vesoul I was again interrupted by the people; they stopped my carriage, cut the traces of my horses, used the most menacing language, and it was with difficulty I escaped

from their blind fury. In the evening my servants ran a still greater risk. The populace seized them tumultuously, tore the trunks from their chaise, broke open the locks, and ransacked every thing they contained. From the inside of the house in which these acts of iniquity were perpetrated, they cried to the mob without—"Stay a little, stay, we will inform you the moment we have found any thing." Thus they wanted only a pretext to proceed to the greatest excesses. Fortunately they were disappointed; the papers were a packet of letters received by me for some time past and expressive of gratitude or friendship; and the manuscript books were accounts of my household expences. My people were therefore allowed to depart; but for the space of near five hours they conceived themselves between life and death, and in the midst of their peril they bound themselves by vows which, immediately on their deliverance, they were eager to fulfil. I must do justice to the municipality of Vesoul, and the department of Haute-Saône, from whom I received the most obliging testimonies of regret: but in Franche-Comté, in Champagne, and perhaps every where,

subordi-

subordination is by no means kept up in the order established by the National Assembly; frequently their intentions are reversed, the people command the national guard, the national guard the municipality, the municipality the district, and the district the department. The reason is, that an abstract method, a mere arrangement of scale above scale, is not sufficient, as I have already observed, for the maintenance of public order. Meanwhile these new outrages, like those of Arcis-sur-Aube, though well known to the deputies whose business it is to bring accusations before the National Assembly, were overlooked. Rumour in vain gave intelligence of them; from indifference to me the Assembly disregarded them; and the greatest disorders were pardoned in favour of the motives in which they originated.

What a series of injustice! What could the National Assembly propose to itself by all this contempt? Did it imagine that the reputations of men were also at its disposal? But the columns of truth, which are the support of reputation, are not so easily moved as the benches of the seigneurs in their parishes.

The Assembly must therefore renounce the project of destroying this kind of distinction and superiority; they cannot efface its heraldry; they cannot even apply to it that elegant word *formerly*, the ingenious invention of the present moment. Reputation, that singular species of property, is not subject to the verification of legislative authority, and time alone can ascertain its titles. Let the Assembly watch over its own reputation; and in the midst of the applauses of the moment and the eulogiums by which it is intoxicated, let it not forget that renown has an immense space to travel over, and that some preparation is necessary for so long a journey. The Assembly assumes to itself the power of assigning to every man his place: and to some it shews an unjust indifference for real services; to others it erects statues for abstractions similar to its own, eloquence excepted. It conceives that it has acquired the right of extending its mandates even to the opinions of generations unborn; and that, like another Saint Bernard, it can parcel out the domain of futurity. It conceives, in short, that all succeeding ages are under its sole empire: and I, writing in the character of a
private

private citizen, do not doubt to erect a monument upon which shall be inscribed the National Assembly with this label, never to be obliterated from it as long as time shall endure — *They have been guilty of ingratitude.*

I pursued my journey, and in many towns I received the most affecting demonstrations of attachment; a certain proof that the errors of the people are the result of an impression remote from their own feelings; and this impression differs in proportion to the credit and character of those who, in the midst of the Assembly or the clubs of the capital, take upon them every where to dictate to opinion, and who are encouraged in maintaining with all their efforts this important supremacy.

A reflection presents itself to my mind upon this subject. There is no power so terrible as that which possesses the means of stirring up the people, and which keeps itself at the same time in obscurity. In the states which are governed by the most despotic authority there is nothing half so alarming. The sultan and visir know the extent of their vengeance, and perceive the dangers to which they expose themselves by the frequent repetition

tion of their unjust severities : but those who have it in their power to excite the madness of the people by whispers and inuendos, are absolutely ignorant of the extravagance to which that madness may proceed. Its very absurdity and excess contribute to their acquittal before any tribunal but that of conscience. While they are contented to hold a language that excites men to mischief, its perpetual course and its frightful vehemence seem not to be imputable to them ; they withdraw and conceal themselves as soon as the first impression is given, and are regaled from their hiding-place with the spectacle of the calamity they have occasioned. I know therefore of no influence the application of which is at once so dastardly and so formidable ; I know of no men more dangerous than those whose malignity vents itself in this manner. It would be better for us that heaven should arm them with its thunder : placed in the midst of clouds, they would equally escape our view ; but with their awkward hands they would not always strike virtue and innocence.

There are perhaps at this moment ten thousand persons in the kingdom, who, without involving themselves, and without being perceived,

ceived, are able to excite the people against an honest man. It is sufficient that he has by his conduct, or his situation, given the smallest pretext for insinuations of the nature of those whose influence is now universally felt. Meanwhile, in comparison with such an authority, what is the council of ten at Venice, which is spoken of with so much terror?

The events of Vesoul, those of Arcis-sur-Aube, the dangers I actually encountered, and those which were prepared for me in other places, obliged me to abandon my design of visiting the waters of Plombières, and to repair with all expedition to a foreign land, the land which I had quitted fourteen months before again to serve France and its inhabitants. What inconstancy of events! what vicissitude of human life! How unhappy should I be had my character been more worthy when I was borne in triumph by the people, than in the days when they thus cruelly persecuted me! But from the testimony of my conscience I can say, that the last year of my administration is the period of which I retain the most honourable recollection. ✓

There

There still remained one injury more to be heaped upon me, that of calumniating the motives of my retreat. By a singularity that has no example, it was blamed in that very assembly where a perfect silence prevailed when I informed them of it; in that assembly from whom a single word of kindness might perhaps have induced me to depart from my resolution. They were aware of this, at least those who dictated to them this silence were afraid of it; they aimed at two objects at once, by all sorts of ill treatment and neglect to oblige me to retire, and then to seize upon the very resignation they necessitated me to make as a new topic of calumny. *He ought not to have abandoned the king.* Yes, malignant calumniators, while you held this language you knew how to find the path to my heart; you knew how to give that direction to the poignard that should make the wound insufferably painful! But I call upon those who are most forward with this accusation maturely to consider whether, destitute as I was, of the obligation by which they are bound, that of the benefits they have received and the gratitude they owe, I have not shown the most unreserved attachment to the person of the king,

king, an attachment that may boldly challenge comparison and rivalry.⁹¹ After my first resignation, to which I was forced, after having been twice exiled, I again returned to pay to the king the homage of my zeal, and placed myself in the midst of the storms with which the throne was surrounded. I should to this hour have been in his majesty's council, if I had not been deprived of the power of serving him. But when the National Assembly had for some time abandoned me, I repeatedly informed the king that I could no longer be useful to him, and that his interest required that I should withdraw. I was become the mere point of sight that served to guide the eye of the assembly in discharging the arrows of discontent, when the collection of the taxes experienced delay, when a scarcity of coin occasioned embarrassments, when the price of bread did not fall with sufficient rapidity, and when other events, the effect of necessity or of the proceedings of the Assembly itself, excited on the part of the people remonstrances and complaints. It was undoubtedly for the advantage of the king that no one should remain near his person who was become by habit a sort of security to the public opinion

for

for measures the direction of which was now placed in other hands. It was for his advantage that this illusory security should not exist for the sole purpose of interrupting the responsibility of the assembly towards the nation, of the governors towards the governed. Without doubt these reasons, and perhaps other reasons beside these, presented themselves to the mind of the king, since, notwithstanding the friendly manner in which he had always treated me from the period of my return from Switzerland, he did not at this time discover any wish that I should remain longer in his service.

It becomes me to observe that the bloody scenes of Nancy, and the impossibility under which the executive government laboured of putting a stop to disorders in their origin, had led me to presage the rigorous measures that would become necessary, and I doubted whether a minister could in propriety and conscience have any concern in recommending this rigour, when, according to his opinion, every thing might have been prevented by a closer observance of the principles of justice and moderation, by giving greater authority to the executive power, and by establishing
more

more equitable divisions in the graduated scale of subordination. Such is the natural constitution of my mind, that, in the ordinary situations of life, my heart can with difficulty form itself to the severity that is frequently necessary; but the hardest of all destinies is that of being the mere executioner of a vengeance the object of which is to support a set of dictatorial opinions, in the digestion of which you have yourself no share*, and whose sanction is rendered an unmeaning form by the unfavourableness of the situation of the king and his council.

I perceived also the diminution of my credit in the council. This diminution was natural, as in losing my popularity I lost my influence; and as ministers, from the severe

* These were not principles that I had lately adopted. In my first administration I resigned because, while the obligation was imposed on me of furnishing resources for the war, I was refused a sitting in the political deliberations, and the power, which I demanded, of watching efficaciously over the expences of the two departments of the army and navy. I was desirous of assisting in the council in order to second the return of peace, after having made useless efforts to prevent war; but then, as now, competitions and jealousies had often more efficacy than the desire of the public good.

responsibility imposed on them, and of which they were every instant reminded by the Assembly, had acquired the power of acting, each in his department, as they thought proper. They however, as well as the minister of finance, were mere machines moved by the hand of the National Assembly, or of its committees ; and I must confess that I have nothing in my nature apposite to this situation, or that should incline me to serve so many masters. The National Assembly, if you look at it from a certain distance, presents a sort of general picture to the mind ; but when examined more nearly and dissected in its constituent parts, you find it made up of individuals whose education, whose character and manners have little in them that accords with the pride of legislative dictation, and obedience to such an assembly is converted into a very painful duty. In short, though I scarcely know why, the habitual contrast between the imperious severity of the National Assembly and the servile pomp of the ministers of the king, renders office insupportable to men of a certain character. It is true we have seen princes and generals chained in former times to the triumphal car of Roman citizens ; but these

these citizens were warriors who had filled the universe with the noise of their exploits; these citizens were a Marcellus, a Scipio, an Emilius. We were therefore but imperfectly prepared by such an example to see in the present day the Assembly, with a renown as yet in expectation, and by a power obtained and preserved without danger, place on the necks of ministers a degrading yoke, and tell them continually of punishment, of personal responsibility, of answering with their heads, and other menaces of a similar nature. It is astonishing how men can be found sufficiently pliant to bear with this rudeness, or good-natured enough to submit without repugnance to such political indignities*.

I had

* When I wrote this paragraph, the constant language of the Assembly respecting the king's ministers was carried, I conceived, to the utmost stretch of indecorum. But I have just seen in the public papers the penal code read in the Assembly the 7th of April, in the name of the constitution committee. This committee must derive great pleasure from chaining, in imagination, the king's ministers sometimes to the oar and sometimes to the pillory, in their character of public functionaries. I congratulate it on these sublime and beautiful ideas; they agree wonderfully with another national proceeding of the same day, that of accepting the offering presented to the Assembly by the

I had long experienced the unpleasantness of such a situation ; but my courage did not forsake

united body of public executioners. These men may well afford some sacrifice, as a rich harvest seems to be preparing for them.

It is reason, the committee will say, genuine unadulterated reason, of which we have made the discovery, that, placing all men on a level before our eyes, dictates to us to receive, in full assembly, the homage of the executioners of justice equally with that of every other class of citizens, and to treat with the same ignominy the ministers of the sovereign and the vilest criminals. This is doubtless the end to which all those abstractions lead that serve as rudiments to the legislators of France. They consider them as new discoveries, whereas they are only elementary principles stripped of all their accessory ideas ; and the ideas which are thus discarded were the united result of the light of experience, of the sentiment of fitness, and the comprehension of genius.

It is thus that the peacock, when robbed of all its beautiful plumage, may be exhibited at the fair as a non-descript animal.

It has never been disputed that executioners were members of society ; but good sense had taught us to hold them in disparagement, that the moral effect of punishment might be thereby increased, and the painful necessity of corporeal inflictions be diminished.

It has never been disputed that ministers were simple citizens ; but good sense had taught us to increase their consideration in every possible way, that, from this moral effect

fake me, because I could from time to time address to the National Assembly some rational observations : but these observations became

effect of the power of administration, modes of constraint and severity might be less requisite.

The consideration of these ideas, which are susceptible of infinite modifications, would soon convince us of the insufficiency of abstract principles for the government of an empire. These pretended original truths are like the pieces of stone drawn from the quarry ; no architect will make use of them in a building till the rule and the chisel have been applied to them.

It is also from short-sightedness, consecrated indeed in the declaration of rights, that equality of pains is confounded with equality of punishments. They are two ideas perfectly distinct. Inflict the pillory, I blush at making use of so degrading an expression, inflict this pain on a man who, by his situation, his manners and habits, is almost indifferent to opinion, and he will perhaps find the punishment supportable ; but subject to the same disgrace a man who, by his education and rank in the world, has been all his life influenced by ideas of honour and esteem, and you will punish him in a very different manner, since he would prefer a thousand deaths to this infamy.

We see every day greater contempt thrown on the agents of the executive power ; and yet the Assembly tell us, that they wish this power to exist, and that something should remain of royal majesty !

I know not how far they mean to go, nor will I ask either the Assembly or the Nation ; both are as yet equally ignorant of the secret.

odious, and the time arrived when it was no longer possible to have any communication with them but by praises and the most unqualified deference. My feelings as little accorded with the extravagant ideas that were every where disseminated, and the wild system which they contrived should triumph. This was known, and at all events the Assembly wished me to withdraw. It was my duty to do so; I was no longer fit for my office, or in a moment of pride I might say, my office was no longer worthy of me. I had as it were outlived the principles which had long been held in honour, and a retreat without spot was the object to which it became me to aspire.

Yes, my heart feels the conviction that I am no longer of this world. Moderation is proscribed on all sides, and it is not possible to appear but under some colours. A plume of feathers, or a cockade, must be displayed by every one who would not be a fugitive, and even the minister of the king is required to wear these badges of party distinction. Some demand of him that his efforts be directed to the support of the royal authority; others, that he should take advantage of the confidence placed in him by the monarch to rob the throne of its
last

last pageantry. And the friends of reason are so cold and dispassionate that they have not courage enough in the midst of the extravagances of their compatriots to mark out a route of their own. The march of wisdom and virtue is no longer understood ; its orbit is ever a circle the centre of which is immutable ; of consequence, to men of a party unable to maintain themselves in a uniform situation upon the meridian of the passions, it appears eccentric and irregular. These passions have undergone a thousand revolutions, and will continue to undergo still more ; while the man who is regulated by virtue and truth, is to-day what he was in times that are past, and what a future period and a different situation will find him. Thus it is that I have remained unchanged, and that the fickle multitude have preferred every new acquaintance and given credit to every stranger as the only genuine advocate of liberty. There was a time when I stood alone in the midst of a court, with no party to support me, with no companion to relieve me, with no model to imitate ; in a period of war and a state of calamity, in which republicans themselves have been accustomed to give a temporary existence to arbitrary au-

thority ; and at this time I was the first openly to profess the generous sentiments of reasonable liberty. I held a language hitherto unknown ; I resisted the despotism of the great ; I took in hand the cause of the people. At that time what were the greater part of those persons doing who now make so ostentatious a parade of their civic virtues and their patriotism ? I will tell you what they were doing : they bent with supple knee before every minister in possession of power, and every clerk the favourite of his principal ; they voluntarily humbled themselves in the presence of power, and studied how with courtly address to please and flatter it ; they meanly served and countenanced every species of despotism ; in fine, they were ostentatious of the symbols of their servility, and bestowed the disdainful name of visionary upon him who now falls so far short of their artificial passions and interested sentiments.

But the times are changed. A part of those of whom I speak have cunningly imagined the total overthrow of government a means to gratify their avarice, their vanity, or their ambition ; while others, not animated by any interested motive, but occupied for the first time
with

with the subject of liberty, feel all the ardour that is common to a recent conversion. At first excited by applause, or goaded by circumstances, they have aimed to arrive at the extremity of their system ; and once arrived, they find themselves as it were wedged in and detained prisoners by the force of that very multitude whom they originally called upon to assist their endeavours.

What was then the conduct of that minister who proclaimed himself the friend of liberty in his first administration ; who rendered it such essential service in the report of council of 27th December 1788 ; and who has since rendered the most important services to its cause by the measures I have related ? Nothing would have been more easy to accomplish, known as he was for the energy of his opinions, and advanced so much farther in the path of truth than his competitors, than to have preserved the advantages and the popularity he had gained. What was most difficult he had done already, while he struggled against the despotism of the great, and combated with so much firmness for the people and their rights. But he disdained to purchase an eclat which could only have been secured
by

by sacrificing the independence of his opinion or the sincerity of his character. He left it to others to atone by the wildness of their tenets the lateness of the period at which they bowed to the empire of philanthropy. Where he stationed himself at first, there he was still to be found ; and he preferred singularity and ridicule to the betraying his understanding and his conscience, and espousing without reserve the dictatorial mandates of the triumphant party. A conduct like this, if it will not be allowed to be courageous, will at least extort esteem, and is worthy of the man who prepared the triumph of liberty and assisted its cause by every means that reason, fidelity, or honour would admit. It is not he then that has changed ; he is the same, and equally deserving of approbation when he exposes himself to the hatred of the powerful by defending the cause of the commons, that class of citizens too long oppressed, and when he submits to sacrifice their partiality rather than desert his morality and his principles. The last of these trials was undoubtedly the greatest ; for it I have sported away what was left of my wealth, what I had saved from the rapacious grasp of the designing, what was of all

all the rest most dear to my heart, and had so long been the consolation of my labours, the kindness, the good will, the affection of the people. It was just, when they had deceived the people about every thing else, that they should also deceive them about me. I have lost their partiality, and those who have obtained it are the advocates of a day, whom yesterday I saw in the multitude of their oppressors; are men who now inveigh against government, after having solicited and obtained their share in the pillage. How have they entered into the fruits of another man's labours? By assuming an outside of valour and intrepidity; by vehemence and unqualified attacks upon ministers, when they knew that the objects against whom they fought were powerless and impotent. This impotence was as yet a secret, and they have made their advantage of the accidental deception. Had they told the truth, had they confessed that they alone were strong, were powerful, were despotic, it would then have been required of them that they should be moderate, sober, and generous. They shook off the yoke of these antiquated virtues by directing the attention of the public to a tyranny that no longer existed, by pretending that

that they were hurried along by the ardour of patriotisin, and on that account inattentive to menaces the most tremendous. The National Assembly was not at liberty to expose their hypocrisy. It had itself been incorrect enough to describe its career as surrounded with dangers and beset with snares; and yet this career, as I have already said, may best be compared to the path, already fitted for the purpose, through which a general returned from war makes his triumphal entry.

How much better would have been a noble simplicity! But, alas! that simplicity is the peculiar attribute of great souls, and the unequivocal stamp of a sublime imagination. Nothing is beautiful but simplicity. Art discolours its brightness and tarnishes its lustre. It is simplicity alone that makes a man appear consistent and uniform, and at all times equal to the situation in which he is placed. But a politic and artificial plan is pregnant with straining, exaggeration, and discordance. Weak and imbecil understandings, incapable of rising to the dignity of truth, at least resolve to rise to the extravagance of opinion, and believe that their notions are perfect and entire when they have formed to themselves
a set

a set of undigested principles, so wild that they are in no danger of being outstripped by another. Simplicity maintains the mind in a perfect equilibrium. Its emanations are graceful and unforced: it is courageous without gasconade; the friend of equality, but not the enemy of rank; the protector of the poor, but not insolent or unjust to the rich; the friend, not the flatterer of the people; the adorer of liberty, not indulgent to licentiousness; severe and inflexible in its principles, not stern, rigid, and intolerant. Thus endowed, the man has no need of affectation, and can trust to his genuine worth. He neither blows the trumpet of vanity, nor walks upon the stilts of pride; he asks no proclamation but truth, and no stature but his own.

It is not to be wondered at, that the different interests men endeavour to reconcile, and the jarring passions they are anxious to serve, are an insurmountable obstacle to the unity and simplicity of their conduct; and if among these passions vanity is predominant, that conduct may be compared to the turnsol, and is frequently even more variable and capricious; for the luminary whose motions are followed

followed by this plant is regular in its orbit ; but popularity, whose precarious rays vanity is ever eager to drink, calls its slaves alternately to every point of the compass, and leaves them not a moment of tranquillity and peace. He therefore that would be firm and unalterable must become so by the elevation of his sentiments ; he must ascend to an eminence where the petty emotions of mankind are no longer perceived, and where the fluctuations of opinion and the contagion of imitation shall be unable to affect him.

I have always resisted these uncertain impressions. The only subjection I have shown to them has been from deference to the public voice, which bears some resemblance to that of glory. But it was not as a slave that I paid this homage : all absolute dependence has ever been offensive to the pride of my heart. I have erected no altar but to honour and morality ; and this I have never quitted either in the midst of the rays of royal majesty, or when the violence and menacing cries of popular authority pursued me. Alas ! had a greater crowd surrounded this altar, had those only been faithful who were of my creed, reason,

reason, that celestial flame, would have had a superior sway : but discouragement seized them like a palsy, and they are become indifferent both to their opinions and their friends. One might say that motion and life have passed entirely into the spirit of party, and that elsewhere nothing remains which can awaken sentiments of generosity, or excite a blush on the cheek of ingratitude. I ought therefore to be pardoned for having wished to retrace the principal circumstances of my administration. One day, in more tranquil times, some recollection, some emotions of kindness will perhaps revive, and this will be my sole recompense. What justice could be less burthenfome than that with which my heart would have been satisfied, than that which was due to him who required only a small share of affection in return for so many services, in return at least for that profusion of sensibility of which he had given such convincing proofs? Disappointed in my hopes, fallen from my just expectations, I will console myself with my own thoughts, and there I shall again find what so long diverted my attention from myself, and what has still the same power over me—a regard for France,

an

an interest in its situation, an inquietude respecting its destiny. In vain should I wish to break all the ties that unite me to its happiness and glory : my mind reflects every instant on a nation which I have so ardently loved ; and when it forgets me, when it says to me with the Horatia of Corneille, *I know you no longer*, my heart feels the endearing reply of her brother, *But I know you, and it is that which kills me.*

Oh ! it is not yet I hope too late for France to be happy ! it is not yet too late for her to indulge just hopes ! This beautiful kingdom is still what it was : a pure and serene sky covers its vast horizon ; a temperate and salubrious air diffuses over every part of it its benign influence ; a fruitful soil still opens its bosom with kindness to the labours of the vigilant cultivator who seeks from it every year new treasures ; the seas still wash its banks, and bring in exchange for its superfluities the various riches of every other country ; the same spirit of activity still supports the emulation of its industrious inhabitants, and through the present obscurity we perceive the visible signals of that prosperity by which France has so long been distinguished as the favourite of fortune and

and the darling offspring of nature. Let this remembrance, let these reviving ideas soften our hearts, and calm our passions ; and when so many blessings invite us to gratitude, let those feelings of hatred subside which a long series of calamities could scarcely justify. Oh ! let peace and union and love exist between children of the same country, and let each of us to produce this effect make some sacrifice ! You who, by a singular example in the annals of the world, have imagined yourselves to possess the right of putting justice, compassion, kindness, and even the sentiments of conscience to the vote, do you at last stretch out the hand of brotherly love to those whom you have so rigorously persecuted. Look not with indifference on the despair of a hundred thousand families, your elders at least by a priority of services to the state which have suffered no interruption. Alleviate the effect of the blows you have given to their property, and to all the rights which constituted their inheritance. Lastly, among the different equalities with which you are smitten, forget not that of happiness, which is more real than any of them. You have hitherto wished to act only by force and constraint, and you have thus created all

the resistance which springs from pride of character. Meanwhile this resistance is with mankind in general, and with Frenchmen in particular, the most difficult to conquer. You have irritated by your imperious forms those whom you have rendered unfortunate ; and, as if you had been jealous of their generosity, you afforded them no opportunity of honourably resigning what you extorted from them. You have always spoken in the name of the law, but it was a law of your own creating : set some value also on that which has founded empires, which conquerors themselves have respected, on that law of wisdom and equity, which, taking men as it finds them, endeavours to unite all classes of citizens by their various interests and their reciprocal connections. One would suppose, from your eagerness to overturn every thing within a given time, that you were deputies of a world in the clouds, and that, forced to return on an appointed day and to carry away with you all ideas of justice and reason, you were under the necessity of completing your arrangement before your departure, and establishing laws by a sort of rapid communication that were destined to endure for ages. But nothing of all this exists ; you
are

are inhabitants of this world, momentary beings like ourselves, educated in the same school, the school of time and experience, and daily receiving new instruction. Those who shall come after you will surpass you in knowledge, as you yourselves have surpassed others. Be therefore diffident and circumspect in the revision you are to make of your different decrees. Forget not that it was in the bosom of divisions, in the midst of all sorts of passions, that you composed the legislation of France. Your work must have felt the impression of these circumstances. Europe sees it, and thus judges of it. Be not you the only persons who place in it an unlimited confidence. Decree not the name, the great name of immutability but to a small number of fundamental truths evidently necessary to the happiness of nations and the maintenance of a reasonable liberty.

Consider all the powerful motives that should have actuated you. Judge from the touchstone of your conscience, if your opinion has been constantly free and independent. Examine whether you have been, in the midst of the agitations of Paris, what you would have been in the asylum of the sage, and in the retreat of silence and tranquillity, where

your feelings and your thoughts would have been your only guide. Examine also if no selfish views have made you deviate from the path that leads to the public good. Take into the account the secret seductions which the desire of reputation, the hope of glory, the habitual charms of praise, the confused ideas of a vague ambition, and a thousand other considerations have presented to you. Finally, reflect whether your regards have not oftener been fixed on the narrow gallery of the house in which you hold your deliberations, than on the immense space where posterity will take its seat.

Having first recollected these things, then determine, if you have the courage to do it, whether it becomes you to decide, for all future generations, the laws you have voted under the irrevocable name of constitution. Examine whether, undeputed to such a wardship by those that went before you, you can justify yourselves in thus subverting and entirely changing the inheritance of ages yet to come, and transmitting to them your decrees with no other security for their rectitude than the infallibility of your discernment. Indeed supposing your attention extended at present no farther

farther than the period of your own existence, can you forget the many difficulties, as yet unproduced, but which will speedily appear? Can you be ignorant of the ambition by which your successors will be inspired to distinguish themselves in their turn? Can you be blind to the different passions that you have set in motion, to the gradual increase of opposition and discontent, in proportion as prudent men shall choose and timid men shall dare to elevate their voice? In a word, can you forget the character of your compatriots, firm and persevering while they are yet in progress, but who will be anxious for some new object, and seek some new impression, as soon as their first wishes have been fulfilled?

How favourable is that situation in which the exercise of no principles is demanded but those of prudence and moderation; where to secure our triumphs it suffices that we circumscribe them, and to consolidate our empire that we limit the extent of its authority! Your glory will be sufficiently ample, your fortune in the utmost degree enviable, if the different judicious institutions that are ascribable to your energy and zeal survive the first agitation of the passions, and yield in peace their generous

harvest to the following generations. Be careful that the regrets of some, the tears of others, the mistrust and the presaging anxieties of all be at length annihilated, and all men will agree to applaud the good for which they are indebted to you. It is not of a timid and slavish approbation that it becomes the National Assembly to be jealous : never yet was there tyrant so bloody, or usurper so arbitrary, but he has obtained this sort of applause in the moment of his power ; and if Tamerlane, after all his victories, had imposed an oath declaring him the mildest and most beneficent prince upon the face of the earth, he would have obtained it with the utmost facility, and Bajazet himself would have signed it across the bars of his cage.

It is not to such expressions of respect that the National Assembly should limit its ambition. It has done enough worthy of the truest commendation, to bid it aspire to an enlightened homage, and to induce it to suffer the real sense of the nation to utter its voice. This sense it is without doubt difficult to discover: for it is not in the midst of the most ardent passions, it is not during the first moment of a great revolution, it is not especially in a city where
licen-

licentiousness and uproar put liberty to silence, that the permanent wants of men and their rooted sentiments can be discovered. I however believe that it depends upon the Assembly at large, but more especially upon a certain number of its members, gradually to tranquillize the minds of the public, and thus insensibly to lead general opinion to that point of moderation where time will infallibly fix it.

It were also to be wished that the persons who think themselves aggrieved would not, by their conduct within the kingdom, or their agitations out of it, protract to a more distant period the triumph of reason. They have not been conscious how greatly their cause would have been served by that composed and dignified countenance, by that majestic silence under oppression, which has frequently disarmed and confounded the haughtiness of the oppressor. But they ought at least to have known that many of their proceedings have aided the views of those who stand in need of the appearances of danger to support at once their credit,

their extravagant opinions, and their unknown projects.

I will not ask men offended in so many ways, to return into France during the reign of the present legislature; they have too much cause to complain both of the form and reality of its proceedings. Supposing them therefore to say—We will not consent to submit till the nation has explained itself by another organ—there would be nothing in this conduct but what an independent and manly mind would naturally suggest. Above all, it cannot be expected that they should be subdued by the pecuniary penalties with which they have so injudiciously been menaced: to expect it from them seems little less than to add insult to injury. But if they should extend their resentment to their country—if they should be blind to all the calamities of which they would in that case be the unfortunate cause—I cannot suppose it—the report is false, and the terror groundless——Is it possible they should enter, as enemies, the country where they drew their first breath? Through what part of it could they march without treading under their feet the ashes of their progenitors, those heroes of France who
perished

perished in defence of the kingdom, and who in the course of their lives experienced sometimes the ingratitude of their country without ever ceasing to love it? They would cry to you from their tombs—"Stop, stop! the titles which we transmitted to you were acquired by our virtues and our courage, and the wealth you inherited from us we would gladly, had it been necessary, have sacrificed to the state. Our name which you bear, demands of you the same duties." They would also say to you—"The country in which you are kindling the flames of war does not belong exclusively to the men of whose conduct you complain; it belongs to you equally with them; it is the country of your children as well as of theirs. Wait with calmness the justice of time; and should it be long in coming, should it never arrive, resolve to bear every thing rather than have a single cause of self-reproach."

I ought not to join my voice in these exhortations; I have no right to address those who do not love me; and at a time when so many motives would animate my language, a painful sensation of injustice restrains
my

my emotion, and forcibly bears down the ebullitions of my soul.

I will only permit myself to invite the discontented citizens not to turn away their eyes from those general benefits, those benefits of no common magnitude, in which they will participate should peace and order be restored, and moderate ideas succeed to first passions. Something has been gained for every one in the destruction of so many abuses; in the erection of that impregnable fortress, which forbids the return of ancient disorders; in the abolition of taxes so long the object of general execration; in the annihilation of the shackles which have hitherto prevented the circulation and increase of the national wealth; in the combination of every part of the empire under the same direction, and the establishment of those equal interests which will for ever exclude the revival of ancient jealousies; in the general adoption and record of invariable principles, the hostages of civil and political liberty; in fine, it is the greatest gain, and a gain to be shared with generations yet unborn, the authority secured to the national voice, and the eternal summons of know-

knowledge and wisdom and genius to co-operate in the great work of the public good.

We are now certainly in possession of all the elements that can form a successful government; and all that is necessary is to combine and amalgamate them properly, and then submit them to the test of time. If we do not seek to promote confusion, we may yet hope one day to become the envy of the whole earth. But if the inconsiderate confidence of some, the animosity and violence of others, and the vanity of all, shall introduce tumult and prevent us from attending to the lessons of wisdom, we shall see within our reach the end of our wishes without being sure of ever attaining it.

Let us be cautious of the secret friends of despotism, but let us be also on our guard against those who make use of the name of liberty to excite a blind enthusiasm. We know not where they would lead us by a passion of this nature. They are ignorant themselves what kind of authority they are desirous of preserving, and many of them would perhaps wish every thing to be reduced to the state of nature, that they might seize to themselves a better portion than has fallen

fallen to their lot of the gifts of fortune. It is terrifying to reflect on the last degree of civil, political, moral, and religious subversion to which some daring and disorderly spirits are disposed insensibly to conduct us. It cannot be doubted but they will find some abuse against which to declaim, some alarm to excite, till they shall have introduced the most absolute and unqualified levelling both of men and things. If they have the courage of the Titans, they would no sooner have overturned the kingdom of France than, mounting upon its ruins, they would endeavour to scale the very heavens; and there, if they could, after having equalized the action of the elements, introduced universal confusion, and burst the prison that now holds the fury of the tempests under restraint, they would enjoy with savage pleasure the wreck of the universe.

Alas! we perceive every where the fruit of their doings, and we have cause to weep over it. Confusion surrounds us, and we do not yet know if we shall escape the calamities of which it is the origin. How is it that you, who should be our instructors and sages, and who have been so sometimes, how is it that

that you have not better calculated the effect of the different passions? How is it that you have not observed their spirit of usurpation and their daily encroachments? Like the philosopher Archimedes, I fear that while you were seeking the solution of your theoretical problems, while you were occupied in drawing inferences from what you call *the principle*, you did not perceive that the enemy was within your walls, and that the city was taken.

Nothing so beautiful as to render men singly dependent upon law; that is, upon a superior who has neither partiality, favouritism, nor folly. But this dependence can only be maintained by a firm and severe countenance when the subject of it is an ignorant, blind and miserable multitude, who forever covet the prizes that are to be drawn in the great lottery of innovation. As long as you talk to them of the removal of grievances you are sure to have them on your side; but when the moment has at length arrived in which something must be maintained and preserved, the task becomes more difficult. You have assiduously employed this multitude in the business of destruction, how will you bring them back to subjection and reverence?

You

You have permitted interested and designing men to deceive them, how will you persuade them to listen to nothing but truth? In the name of the public good exert yourselves in this arduous task, and lend your exertions to the cause of undisguised reason. You above all, who to the feelings of a citizen unite a sound understanding and a moderate temper, willingly undergo the risk that may attend upon ministers of peace and negociators of the public felicity. Watch the moment most favourable to this virtuous enterprize. Reconcile one party to the inconveniences they must continue to suffer, and the other to the advantages they ought cheerfully to yield. The ambassadors of reason, and having derived your credentials from her, assert her rights and her authority. Labour to model into the most advantageous form, opinion, the mistress of the world, the sovereign of legislators themselves. Mix in all public assemblies, not for the sake of shocking and giving offence to the prevailing passions, but for the sake of tempering their exaggerations with the gentleness of wisdom, for the sake of counterbalancing in some small degree the influence of those who, by the sole energy of their charac-

character, hurry their disciples into the most baneful extremes. You will have done much if you are able to restore the respectability of prudence, if you can procure her some friends, or even gain her a hearing. You will have done much if you can begin the treaty of union, if, so to express myself, you can open the conferences between the belligerent powers of liberty and order, popularity and justice, the wild systems of theory and the sage lessons of experience, the gratifying the wants of these and securing the indemnification of those, the irritated resentment of party and the general oblivion that public interest demands. Do not be deterred by the heat of opposition and the asperity of contradiction. Mind has its earthquakes and its storms as well as matter; but hope revives when the tempest has subsided, the convulsions of liberty will cease, and liberty itself will become the inmate of tranquillity. She will no longer be the instrument of insolent triumph to a part, but of happiness to the whole, that general happiness which can alone secure the duration of human establishments. It is the cement which science is bound

bound to invent and philanthropy to apply. You then who love liberty in the purity of your hearts, who love her without hypocrisy and without imposture, be it your business to decorate her with the attractions most dear to the human mind, and the truth that reason and judgment can least of all resist. After a thousand agitations let France at length see the term of her anxieties. Let that day of peace and universal contentment, that day so ardently desired, arise upon this important country, which shall be followed by long years of prosperity and virtue. In that day my heart will fully rejoice, will be pervaded with triumph and honest exultation. I trust I shall be forgiven if with this exultation I mix one personal feeling: the epocha of the happiness of nations is the period of their justice; it cannot exist till the clouds of falsehood are dissipated, and the vices compelled to inglorious flight. I then will expect from this epocha a new verdict upon my actions. Till then let the favourites of fortune, the vanquishers of morality and truth, triumph unmolested; their triumphs shall be only for a day. The gaudy cars upon which pride
has

has elevated them shall crumble into atoms : they imagine their glory immortal ; but, ere half their journey is over, they shall be driven, confounded, abashed and despised, to their original obscurity.

A P P E N D I X,

23 *April*, 1791.

THIS work was entirely printed off when I received intelligence of the insurrection of the Thuilleries of the 18th instant. I feel it necessary to say thus much lest my expressions should be too rigorously compared with the sentiments with which Europe is at this moment penetrated. Unfortunate monarch! if the tenderest interest in your situation on the part of all foreign nations can mitigate your distress, enjoy for a moment that consolation. Alas! you have not then obtained from a misguided people the tribute that the whole world agrees to pay to unfortunate virtue; and it is in the name of that liberty of which you were the generous founder that they infringe the laws in order to put you under restraint. If the king
had

had been profligately indifferent to religion, if he had neglected the solemn rights of the church, he would now have been the hero of a vain-glorious philosophy ; and the unprincipled writers, who are the oracles of the multitude, would then have found arguments in his praise that the unblemished life of the best of princes has not been able to supply. Because with a tender and fearful conscience he desired to receive the sacraments from one priest rather than another, the most dangerous fermentation has been excited against him. It well became men destitute alike of principles and virtue, profligate scribblers in the midst of a dissolute metropolis, to impose laws upon the secret sentiments of a pious monarch ; pious, not from any promptings of affectation, but in all the simplicity of a candid and honourable mind. Who shall give credit to them when they talk of holy sacraments and the pacific observances of piety, with madness sparkling in their eyes and the uncurbed fierceness of a tyrant ? What an abuse of power ! what an excess of disorder ! Surely you did not foresee all these calamities ; you, who might so easily have prevented them by not imposing

an oath that the public welfare did not require, or at least by assenting to declare that you did not mean to interfere with what was of a spiritual nature. Could it be necessary to add a religious misunderstanding to all the other disorders? Undoubtedly the representatives of the nation have a right to limit the duties of the public servants; but could they forget that the essence of the catholic faith being mysterious, it was by religious persuasion, and not a decree of civil authority, that private individuals can recognize in the clergy of the church the power of consecrating the host, of receiving confession, administering absolution, and directing conscience? It is only in a religion, as simple in its doctrines and its discipline as the protestant, that there can exist a perfect accord between the civil and ecclesiastical authority; but where your creed obliges you to believe in the divine communication of a mysterious and supernatural power to certain official characters, a sentiment so spiritual and so sacred can never be subjected to the regulations of human law; and in such cases the forbearance of the legislature, and its deference to the irresistible

voice of conscience, are so many acts of indispensable justice. But it is to the unthinking multitude that in the present case they permit the decision of these delicate and inviolable principles. Alas ! if the multitude are permitted to transplant the sacred tree of religion, instead of placing themselves tranquilly under its shade, they will soon altogether overthrow it, and generations will pass away before it can erect its head and grow up as before.— At the moment that I am writing this I learn another instance of their violence. I am informed of a lawless troop who have treated with wanton insult the nuns of charity ; and throwing contempt even upon the purity of their sex and the innocence of their lives, have exercised upon them a treatment more cruel than death. The misguided people no longer recollected that it was to succour their infirmities that these charitable women had devoted their lives ; that while they discharged this sacred obligation, they surmounted the antipathies of nature ; that to render an acceptable service to the Creator, they were perpetually and with unexampled patience employed in the mitigation of human distress.

They

They ceased to recollect that these children of the celestial Father, their own minds unspotted with the contagion of sin, boldly approached the disgusting spectacle that the devastations of profligacy exhibit in the victims of an hospital, those miserable ruins of an exhausted nature whom it is yet our duty to heal and restore. They had no longer any thing to expect from mankind, but the respect due to their disinterested vows; and they have seen themselves exposed to the most ignominious insults. They had no longer a place of residence or rest but the humble cells of their convent, and lawless ravagers have invaded that sacred retreat. No, if from madmen like you they had studied the precepts of religion, they would never have consented to pass their lives beside the beds of your sickness and desolation. But I know what it was that animated your presumption: you believed that they would support your indignities with the same god-like patience with which they submit to the astonishing but voluntary sacrifices of their profession. You were not mistaken; even in this emergency their unequalled virtue will support them. But there is a just and
and

and impartial judge that sits on high, and what decision think you will he pass upon your ingratitude? Frenchmen, renowned for generosity and philanthropy, what savage nation has usurped the country you once inhabited!

T H E E N D.

Single Chamber 227



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT LOS ANGELES

THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below

FEB 7 1944

RECEIVED													
MAIN LOAN DESK													
OCT 14 1964													
A.M. P.M.													
7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6		

DEC 16 1950

MAR 3 1960

JAN 09 2006

RECEIVED

RECEIVED
MAIN LOAN DESK

A.M. P.M.													
7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6		

REC'D MLD

GRADUATE RESERVE SERVICE

SEP 23 1964

SEP 23 1964

RENEWAL

OCT 14 1964

A.M. P.M.													
7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6		

REC'D LD-URC

NOV 27 1964

MAY 27 1966

JAN 18 1986

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 113 928 6



3 1158 01292 5268

